

MEMORY, INTERPELLATION, AND ASSEMBLAGE: MULTIVALENT SUBJECTIVITY  
IN THE NOVELS OF VIRGINIA WOOLF, GEORGE ORWELL, AND EVELYN WAUGH

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## ABSTRACT

This project assesses assemblage theory and attempts to optimize it for the study of modernist literature. The first stage of this process examines contemporary assemblage theory to determine the extent to which it is able to account for the various inter-relationships between individuals, the groups they form, and the power structures that emerge from but act as constraints upon interpersonal relationships, especially as they appear in modernist texts; the second stage uses this modified version of assemblage theory to respond to the critical discourses surrounding the writing of Virginia Woolf, George Orwell, and Evelyn Waugh.

Ultimately, this project argues that assemblage theory needs to be modified in four ways to account for the depictions of subjects navigating multiple assemblages that Woolf, Orwell, and Waugh provide. First, assemblage theory requires a more robust model of interpellation than is implied by the term “territorialization” – one that accounts for the semiotic element of interpellation, wherein the individual interprets his or her social setting to decide what type of action is most appropriate. Second, this semiotic element suggests the need to disregard Manuel DeLanda’s insistence that only “valid historical actors” should be treated with assemblage theory, as Woolf, Orwell, and Waugh all show individuals acting on behalf of assemblages that do not exist as ontologically valid entities according to DeLanda’s standards. Third, the three modernist authors show the value of treating Nietzsche’s account of the Apollonian and Dionysian as a model of assemblage by enabling a discussion of the motivations behind several of the most powerful forms of interpellation. Finally, these modernist texts suggest it is important for assemblage theory to distinguish between different scales of personal and collective memory to be able to account for the different registers of individual and collective experience that motivate group activity and signal assemblages’ temporal parameters.

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## DEDICATION

For Sarah van Houten and Hannah Horacki, without whom this project would have been neither worthwhile nor possible.

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## INTRODUCTION

This project utilizes assemblage theory in order to better understand the dynamic of reciprocal relationships between individual identity and group membership in modernist novels by Virginia Woolf, George Orwell, and Evelyn Waugh. All three authors are concerned with depicting individuals navigating assemblages on a variety of spatiotemporal scales at a time when debates around the proper relationships between individual and group were at the heart of continued global conflict. For instance, fascism promoted unity and cumulative utility over individual rights to the extent that personal desires were seen as trivial compared to the supposed group needs of the so-called Thousand-Year Reich, and Soviet communism's obsession with abstract ends rendered the personal implications of the means used to achieve those ends irrelevant. Additionally, as DeLanda notes in *War in the Age of Intelligent Machines*, new ideas about the nature of individual and group even changed the mode of warfare during this period, so that the precisely timed advances across "no man's land" that characterized WWI gave way to the largely autonomous platoons of WWII that were increasingly given particular objectives rather than being ordered to proceed in a precise way at a specific moment (59-72). In the novels of Woolf, Orwell, and Waugh, such political and martial abstractions about the relationship between individual and group result in layered processes of interpellation that depict not only "a subjected being, who submits to a higher authority" (Althusser 123), but a subject who navigates multiple authorities (both the identity and number are in flux) on countless spatiotemporal scales that make various (often contradictory) claims to his or her allegiance. Assemblage theory makes it possible to address such interdisciplinary concerns by providing a framework that can examine the interactions between individuals and groups in terms of the spatiotemporal parameters of these groups. Additionally, it provides a way to account for the personal and collective

discourses (memory, shared memory, collective memory, and history) used to make sense of the current identity of individuals and groups as these discourses code the conditions of group membership.

In my theory-focused chapter, I will examine contemporary assemblage theory to determine the extent to which it can account for Woolf's, Orwell's, and Waugh's depictions of the inter-connections among individuals, the groups they form, and the power structures that emerge from interpersonal relationships yet act as constraints upon them. Further, I will study how meaning is generated, exchanged, and modified in such systems, and will discuss how assemblage theory can be applied to interactions between memory, collective memory, and history. The purpose of this section will be twofold. First, I will provide an assessment of Deleuze and Guattari's and Manuel DeLanda's models of assemblage theory as tools for the study of modernist literature. Second, with a view towards optimizing a model of assemblage theory for an examination of the relationships between individual identity and simultaneous membership in multiple groups in the works of the aforementioned modernist authors, I will propose ways to expand contemporary assemblage theory for use in modernist literary scholarship. In this way, I will link these two discourses not merely by bringing the two into contact with each other, but by using each to respond to the other.

The fundamental research questions that will emerge from the project's theoretical chapter suggest the applicability of assemblage theory to literature, and specifically to Woolf's, Orwell's, and Waugh's novels. Posing these questions will involve utilizing assemblage theory to examine issues relating to questions of ontology, discourse, and subjectivity.<sup>1</sup> First, with

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<sup>1</sup> DeLanda's model of assemblage theory provides an effective approach for responding to questions of the first sort, as DeLanda is primarily concerned with questions of group ontology (see, for example, *A New Philosophy of Society*). Though DeLanda approaches questions of discourse much more occasionally and indirectly than questions of ontology, something very near a coherent model of assemblage discourse is implicit in DeLanda's works. It will



reference to ontology, it will be important for this model to ask questions such as, of which groups are the characters members? How are these groups structured? What positions do the characters occupy in them? Do the particular actions of the characters shape the overall groups to which they belong (e.g., creating a top-down/bottom-up feedback loop), and if so, how do these changes take place? Second, to account for the transmission and operation of meaning depicted in these novels, it will be necessary to consider a variety of questions relating to discourse theory: what rhetorical strategies, knowledge structures, systems of meaning, worldviews, etc., are associated with the groups depicted in these novels? How do these elements of meaning and knowledge function within the groups? And what are the expectations and/or responsibilities of group members within these discursive frameworks? Finally, to account for the particular predicaments individual characters find themselves in, it will be necessary to have a theoretical model that considers various questions of subjectivity. How do differences and/or conflicts between the groups (ontological and/or discursive) influence the characters? How do the characters experience and navigate moments of simultaneous membership in these groups? And how do the characters negotiate these points of tension?

Though the three authors rarely form the focus of a single study, Woolf, Orwell, and Waugh all depict gaps and tensions between individual identity and group membership (often in terms of memory, collective memory, and history), and all three use these depictions to explore the discourses that govern group membership and influence large-scale action, particularly in the context of war. Thus, by applying the insights gained from my examination of assemblage theory

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be with regard to questions of the second sort that a consideration of Deleuze and Guattari's treatment of assemblage theory in *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980) will become especially fruitful. It is the final avenue of consideration, subjectivity, that requires the most work. To this end, I will argue that Althusser's model of interpellation provides a way to account for dual relationships between individuals and groups – relationships that at once define for individuals who they are, but also cause the actions of these individuals to shape the very material and discursive structure of the groups that constantly apply pressure to individuals to act in and, indeed, to exist in certain ways. This is not inconsistent with DeLanda's model.

to the novels of Virginia Woolf, George Orwell, and Evelyn Waugh, I will attempt bring this theory into dialogue with literature rooted in a historical moment when the relationships between individuals, groups, and institutional power structures were of central importance.

To this end, I will examine these three authors' depictions of the thresholds at which individual actions become group actions, and how they assemble into groups that generate social structures to influence the actions of group members. For example, many of Woolf's novels, including *Jacob's Room* (1922), *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), and *Between the Acts* (1941), foreground questions of individual and group ontology – what are people and groups, and how do the two define each other? – to depict individuals as intrinsically isolated but with the occasional ability to have profound experiences of mass unity. These novels suggest the relationship between individual and collective is subject to a linguistic predicament: for it is impossible to communicate in an adequately precise way, but it is absolutely necessity to attempt to communicate nonetheless because there is no other way to form meaningfully connected communities. Many of Orwell's novels, including *Burmese Days* (1934), *Homage to Catalonia* (1938), and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949), approach such questions by shifting the focus slightly more onto the discourses that shape identity and group membership, examining how institutional structures manipulate accounts of the past to assert control and consolidate power. Several of Waugh's novels, including *Decline and Fall* (1928), and the *Sword of Honour* Trilogy – *Men at Arms* (1952), *Officers and Gentlemen* (1955), and *Unconditional Surrender* (1961) – combine such concerns with group ontology and discourse to critique society for using discourse alone to coerce and enforce group membership, regardless of whether these discourses are able to convincingly describe reality. Such distance between discourse and world generates abundant dramatic irony and depictions of official misrepresentation or outright falsification, which render

personal and official accounts of events absurd and call into question the ability of institutions to act intelligently. These Waugh novels also consider how subjectivity operates in relation to assemblages that function on different spatiotemporal scales: the needs of an individual frequently come up against those of a family or class, the latter of which have been formed and function on larger spatial and temporal scales; but family and class sometimes become insignificant compared to the broader needs of a nation; which, in turn, pales in comparison to the needs of a two-thousand year old church that insists one's actions ought to be predicated on belief in an eternal God and the immortal soul.

Undertaking this analysis of Woolf's, Orwell's, and Waugh's novels in terms of the experience of individuals attempting to make sense of and navigate assemblages operating on various spatiotemporal scales will necessitate supplementing contemporary assemblage theory in a few ways. First, as one always acts as a subject and subjectivity always emerges according to one's perception of one's identity and how that identity properly relates one to collectives, the analysis of these texts necessitates a model of territorialization focused specifically on the scale of the subject. To this end, I will argue for a model of assemblage interpellation that accounts for the fact that individual action is dependent on the individual interpreting his or her social setting to decide which actions are most appropriate in a given social context. Second, the importance of this semiotic component of interpellation draws attention to the fact that Woolf, Orwell, and Waugh all show individuals acting on behalf of assemblages that do not exist according to DeLanda's standards. This suggests it may not matter whether or not the apparent assemblages actually exist, and implies that it may be valuable to suspend Manuel DeLanda's insistence that only "valid historical actors" should be treated as assemblages for the sake of being able to describe subjective experiences of assemblage. Third, Woolf, Orwell, and Waugh all depict

individuals attempting to make sense of themselves and their proper places in the world by drawing on a variety of personal and collective discourses about the past to respond to assemblages operating on various spatiotemporal scales. This fact suggests it is important for assemblage theory to distinguish explicitly between different scales of personal and collective memory to account for the different registers of individual and collective experience that motivate group activity and signal assemblages' temporal parameters. Finally, the depictions of individual isolation by Woolf, Orwell, and Waugh draw attention to the profound need for companionship and community that shapes the types of assemblage they present. Their depictions suggest the value of treating Nietzsche's explanation of the Apollonian and Dionysian as a particular description of assemblage that provides a vocabulary for discussing the material and discursive bases of group membership in a way that accounts for the personal needs that drive the most powerful forms of interpellation.

## SECTION ONE – THEORETICAL APPROACH

### **Assemblage Subjectivity: Toward a Theory of Modernist Group Membership and Modes of Remembering**

But self or person is not any one impression, but that to which our several impressions and ideas are supposed to have reference. (David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* 299)

Recollection is the old present, not the past. (Gilles Deleuze, *Empiricism and Subjectivity* 94-5)<sup>2</sup>

This section focuses primarily on critiquing assemblage theory according to how well it can account for modernist depictions of individual subjectivity, the inter-connections among individuals, the groups these individuals form, and the discourses and power structures that emerge from interpersonal relationships but act as constraints upon them. With this goal in mind, it will begin by examining the roots of assemblage theory in the works of David Hume, Gilles Deleuze, and Félix Guattari to give an overview of the history of the elements of assemblage theory that are particularly germane to this study – subjectivity, memory and habit, social assemblage, and membership in multiple assemblages. This overview will provide context for Manuel DeLanda’s contemporary contributions to assemblage theory, which will be outlined in the second part of this chapter: his utilization of Fernand Braudel to argue for an assemblage-based reading of society as a set of sets; his focus on assemblages as valid historical actors; his regularization of Deleuzian terminology and so-called “parameterization” of the assemblage; his conception of assemblage theory as a way to counteract the dangers of micro-, macro-, and meso-reductionism; and his discussion of the impact of conflict on identity. While the first two parts of this chapter will give insight into the relationship between individual and group, my assessment of assemblage theory as a tool for the analysis of modernist texts considers those

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<sup>2</sup> *Empirisme et subjectivité* (1953).

elements of the approach more directly concerned with the study of literature. For this reason, the third aim of this chapter will be to consider the models of language and literature provided by DeLanda, Deleuze, and Guattari. The slight incompatibility between DeLanda's model of language and Deleuze and Guattari's theory of art and literature indicates several limitations of contemporary assemblage theory; thus, the fourth part of this chapter will be devoted to a consideration of these limitations, particularly as they relate to my attempt to optimize the theoretical framework for the study of modernist literature. Finally, I will follow the resulting version of assemblage theory, adapted to a literary studies context, by framing the particular research methodology that I will use in my study of Woolf's, Orwell's, and Waugh's novels. In this way, I will link theory and literature not merely by bringing the two into contact with each other, but by using each to respond to the other. I will, on the one hand, use DeLanda's model to supplement current readings of group structure and modes of remembrance in modernist fiction; on the other hand, I will assess the suitability of DeLanda's version of assemblage theory for these ends. In other words, the conversation I am facilitating between modernist literature and assemblage theory consists not merely of applying one to the other, but also bringing the two into dialogue.

### **Background: Subjectivity, Memory, and Social Assemblage**

Though assemblage theory has roots in multiple areas of study, the model of subjectivity it provides can be traced back to 18<sup>th</sup> Century Scottish philosopher David Hume's so-called bundle theory. Hume's empiricism is grounded in the assertion that an object can be conceived in terms of a bundle of its properties, and Hume contends that, when reflecting on himself, what he sees is not a whole and unified self. What is often discussed as the self appears to Hume to be

extremely unstable and grounded in the perception of sensations and objects. Consequently, humans

are nothing but a bundle or collection of different perceptions, which succeed each other with an inconceivable rapidity, and are in a perpetual flux and movement.[...] The mind is a kind of theatre, where several perceptions successively make their appearance; pass, re-pass, glide away, and mingle in an infinite variety of postures and situations. There is properly no simplicity in it at one time, nor identity in different; whatever natural propension we may have to imagine that simplicity and identity. (Hume 300-1)

Hume's assertion that the self is not a unified whole flies in the face of 17<sup>th</sup> Century French Philosopher René Descartes's famous dictum, *Cogito ergo sum* ("I think, therefore I am"), which builds all knowledge of the world on the foundation of knowledge of the self, so that the self forms the axiom that allows Descartes to deduce a complex system of knowledge. Hence, by challenging the stability of the self, Hume is interrogating not only what it is to be a human, but also what it is possible to know once one has called Descartes's version of humanity into question: he is thereby challenging a core tenet of Western epistemology and ontology.

Hume's emphasis on the self as split or multiple is echoed in the theory of assemblages put forward by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. While their work is often focused on assemblages that are composed of non-human elements (either partially or wholly), their model of *human* social assemblage follows Hume in a number of ways. As Manuel DeLanda notes, Deleuze and Guattari never actually provide "a full assemblage analysis of subjectivity,[... but] it is possible to derive one from [Deleuze's] work on Hume" (*Assemblage* 26). In fact, in what

masquerades as a monograph on Hume,<sup>3</sup> Deleuze provides some of his most detailed statements on his own sense of the nature of subjectivity:

what do we mean when we speak of the subject? We mean that the imagination, having been a collection, becomes now a faculty; the distributed collection becomes now a system. The given is once again taken up by a movement, and in a movement transcends it. The mind becomes human nature. The subject invents and believes; *it is a synthesis of the mind.* (*Empiricism* 92)

Deleuze draws on Hume to define “the given” as “the flux of the sensible, a collection of impressions and images, or a set of perceptions. It is the totality of that which appears, being which equals appearance” (87). In a sense, “the given” can be thought of as material reality as experienced by a subject – an interpretation consistent with a conventional understanding of empiricism as “[a] form of epistemology which holds that all knowledge is derived from experience through the five senses” (Macey 108). Though a type of subjectivity seems to be emergent in the above description, Deleuze’s phrasing does not provide a model of a fully-formed subject. Instead, he is concerned more with the internal fracture of what may appear to be a unified self: “Underneath the self which acts are little selves which contemplate and which render possible both the action and the active subject. We speak of our ‘self’ only in virtue of these thousands of little witnesses which contemplate within us: it is always a third party who

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<sup>3</sup> As is the case with all of Deleuze’s monographs, the above discussion of subjectivity is as much a statement of Deleuze’s own philosophy as it is a description of Hume’s. This is evident in Deleuze’s infamous description of how he “compensated” for writing works about the history of philosophy:

I suppose the main way I coped with it at the time was to see the history of philosophy as a sort of buggery or (it comes to the same thing) immaculate conception. I saw myself as taking an author from behind and giving him a child that would be his own offspring, yet monstrous. It was really important for it to be his own child, because the author had to actually say all I had him saying. But the child was bound to be monstrous too, because it resulted from all sorts of shifting, slipping, dislocations, and hidden emissions that I really enjoyed. (“Letter” 6)



says ‘me’” (*Difference* 75). In this way, Deleuze echoes Hume’s view of the subject as internally fractured into multiple potential subjectivities. But whereas Hume sees the apparent subject as a “bundle,” Deleuze views the subject in terms of “larval subjects” (78), which may or may not become active or inactive at any given moment. More importantly, they never permanently cohere to form a final and singular subject. Of course, where Hume is responding to the subject-centred philosophy of Descartes, Deleuze and Guattari are responding to, on the one hand, psychoanalysis in its broadest sense and, on the other hand, the subject-centred philosophy of existentialism. In both instances, Deleuze and Guattari’s response is framed by foregrounding “assemblages” in place of the unified whole that is implied by the term “subject.”

This is not to say, however, that the “larval subjects” of Deleuze’s approach do not sometimes combine into an assemblage that acts much like a singular subject. It is in just such periodic moments of subjective emergence that habit and memory become crucial to Deleuze’s model of subjectivity. Larval subjects are initially activated and brought into contact with each other by external events that stimulate some combination to activate at a given moment, and the repetition of similar kinds of events transforms the connections between larval selves from contingent to habitual: “These thousands of habits of which we are composed – these contractions, contemplations, pretensions, presumptions, satisfactions, fatigues; these variable presents – these form the basic domain of passive syntheses” (*Difference* 78). In this way, the repetition of experience or stimulus produces a repetition of emergent modes of subjectivity, until both pre-subjective connections and provisional subjectivity become habitual. Memory and the remembering of past acts of remembering play an important role in this model, as habitual assemblages of larval subjectivities are activated when an event is interpreted as being sufficiently similar to past events and consequently triggers the habitually emergent mode of

subjectivity: “The mind, considered from the viewpoint of the appearance of its perceptions, was essentially succession, time. To speak of the subject now is to speak of duration, custom, habit, and anticipation. Anticipation is habit, and habit is anticipation” (*Empiricism* 92). Even where “Deleuze’s own philosophical project is less concerned with subjectivity *per se* than with a certain ‘larval’ or pre-subjective state” (O’Sullivan 2-3), his model provides a way to describe what is happening on the scale of the subject, though this “subject” is not the singular entity often conceived. Memory leads to anticipation – one’s memory of what has happened in the past leads to an assessment of what is likely to happen next – so that the emergence of momentary but apparently unified subjectivity is the result of assemblages of pre-subjective larval selves being activated habitually in response to the mind’s attempt to interpret the present in terms of the past.

By operating at the junction of the perceived past and its anticipated repetition, habit connects Deleuze’s model of subjectivity to his treatment of time, memory, and history. Whereas the repetition of events or stimuli produces habits that enable assemblages of larval subjects to emerge under sufficiently similar circumstances, and whereas the memory of past events shapes how elements of “the given” are interpreted as signs, the subject, for Deleuze, functions by always reformulating the past and synthesizing memory with reference to experiences of the present: “*Signs* as we have defined them – as habitudes or contractions referring to one another – always belong to the present.[...] [E]very sign is a sign of the present, from precisely only dimensions of the present itself. A scar is the sign not of a past wound but of ‘the present fact of having been wounded’” (*Difference* 77). Paradoxically, though the apparent subject emerges as a result of both the *memories* that inform the interpretation of the present and the habitual *responses* to events that seem of a similar nature, it is always “the given” present situation that determines how a subject interprets the past: “In a word, the past as such is not given. It is

constituted through, and in, a synthesis which gives the subject its real origin and its source” (*Empiricism* 95). In this way, what Deleuze treats as the continual *becoming* of the subject (as opposed to “being,” a term which runs the risk of suggesting a final or perfected state) is a loop of circular causality, in which an event provides a stimulus that triggers memory and habit, which produce the momentary emergence of a particular subject (assembled from a larger number of larval subjects), which in turn reinterprets memory and re-forms habit with reference to itself as it emerges.

The pattern of circular causality present in the movement from memory to anticipated future to habit to subject dissolves the division between the experience of time and subjectivity itself. It is in this sense that Deleuze treats the subject as being synonymous with the synthesis of past and present in an anticipation of a certain future:

In short, the synthesis posits the past as a *rule* for the future.[...] But, in fact, memory alone does not bring about a synthesis of time; it does not transcend the structure, its essential role becomes the reproduction of the different structures of the given. It is rather habit which presents itself as a synthesis, and habit belongs to the subject. Recollection is the old present, not the past. (*Empiricism* 94-5)

That the perceived structure of the present shapes belief, which always leads to the synthesis of time, suggests that the subject does not have access to the past simply as it occurred, or even as an embodiment of the subjectivity that has experienced it. The act of remembering is semiotic and editorial, so that remembrance of past events is always undertaken by a particular assemblage of larval subjects, always selectively, and always in the service of interpreting a particular present. Yet, a structure emerges as elements of the “old present” are repeatedly reinterpreted as relevant to the present, and this suggests the automated emergence of certain

assemblages of larval subjects. While a particular given never produces the same subject that existed at a previous moment, there will be greater overlap between the forms of subjectivity that emerge as combinations of larval subjects begin to habitually co-emerge. This is a model that emphasizes internal fracture, where the apparent subject is merely the currently emergent assemblage of larval subjects, though it also acknowledges that habits promote the repeated emergence of certain combinations of larval subjects and encourage the continued re-emergence of sub-sets of the larval subjects that are active at a given moment.

Whereas Deleuze's model of subjectivity, in this implicit formulation, emphasizes the subject as internally fragmented, his model of social assemblage suggests the subject is also *externally* fragmented by its participation in a number of different groups with different accounts of reality and different expectations of their members. Because a subject is a member of so many different social assemblages with such radically different (and often fluid) expectations of their group members – that is, each assemblage may expect the subject to behave in different and potentially contradictory ways – it is difficult for a subject to act without reference to any of these assemblages in a truly “free” way. The social fracture of the subject is not, however, distinct from the internal fracture:

[Deleuze] insists that the interior is rather produced from a general exterior, the immanent world of relations. The nature of this production and its regulation proved to be one of the foci of his philosophy. Hence, human subjectivity as a produced interiority undergoes changes according to its social milieu, its relations, its specific encounters, and so forth: this is a topic that the two volumes of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* deal with, and can be summed up in the following Deleuzian sentiment: “The interior is only a selected interior.” (Roffe 98)

In this model, there is give and take in relationships between memories, desires, routines, one's social realities, one's social positions, the relationships between the groups of which one is a member (as well as these groups' relationships to other groups), and one's role in shaping one's social realities. The consequent difficulty of separating internal and external fracture does not eliminate the need to discuss coherent social wholes, but it radically undermines the stability or internal consistency of social wholes at any scale (at the scale of the individual/subject as much as the international scale). As Brian Massumi puts it, "There is no interiority in the sense of a closed, self-reflective system. There is only multileveled infolding of an aleatory outside [...]. The self remains susceptible to identity crises brought on by confusions between 'inside' and 'outside'" (80). This suggests that external events are in constant contact and dialogue with larval subjectivities: external events impose themselves upon the reflecting mind of a subject, which is nothing more than a momentary assemblage of larval subjects, and this assemblage interprets such events according to a frame of reference formed by habit and by the interpretation of past events to create an account of the present. That present then produces a new assemblage of larval subjects which will, in turn, interpret future events differently.

But even while external events shape which larval subjectivities are activated at a given moment, particular social relationships do not completely define the subjects or the terms upon which they assemble, and this points to a radical instability at all scales. It is in this context that Deleuze discusses the "exteriority of relations," which he sees as a central feature of his ontological model: "*Relations are external to their terms*. 'Peter is smaller than Paul,' 'The glass is on the table': relation is neither internal to one of the terms which consequently be subject, nor to two together. Moreover, a relation may change without the terms changing" (Deleuze & Parnet 55). The exteriority of relations applies to any related things, even inanimate things, so

that the relationship between glass and table does not totalize or fully account for either item. At the same time, though, Deleuze introduces his conception of the exteriority of relations in his Hume monograph, and he relates it directly to the model of subject formation:

[Hume] created the first great logic of *relations*, showing in it that all relations (not only “matters of fact” but also relations among ideas) are external to their terms. As a result, he constituted a multifarious world of experience based upon the principle of the exteriority of relations. We start with atomic parts, but these atomic parts have transitions, passages, “tendencies,” which circulate from one to another. These tendencies give rise to *habits*. Isn’t this the answer to the question “what are we?” We are habits, nothing but habits – the habit of saying “I.” Perhaps, there is no more striking answer to the problem of the Self. (*Empiricism* x)

It is here that the distinction between “group” or “entity,” on the one hand, and “assemblage,” on the other, become important: as Hume’s subjects emerge in relation to their perceptions, Deleuze and Guattari’s emerge in relation to the larger social realities in which subjects find themselves. Their individual is an assembled subject that emerges in relation to a particular social reality. That larval subject combines with others to form the subject as both an assemblage of larval subjectivities and a part of a particular social assemblage, while still containing the potential to be activated according to a different social reality as a different larval subjectivity. At the same time, though, the exteriority of relations means that any sort of social group must also be an assemblage; the fact that the exteriority of relations and associated instability of the subject prevent group identity from totalizing group members suggests that what appears to be a coherent group cannot be more at a given moment than an emergent assemblage of the subjects – who are momentarily defined as group members only because they, themselves, are assemblages

of larval subjects that have emerged as a subject momentarily consistent with membership in the group in question. This joint fracture of social wholes and subjects leads Deleuze to focus on assemblage, as the exteriority of relations joins with the internal fracture of the subject to suggest that anything that appears to be a coherent entity is, in fact, an unstable multiplicity in an ongoing process of becoming: “Multiplicities are made up of becomings without history, of individuation without subject (the way in which a river, a climate, an event, a day, an hour of the day, is individualized)” (Deleuze in Deleuze & Parnet viii). Thus, when Deleuze and Guattari argue that “The human being is a segmentary animal” in the sense that “Segmentarity is inherent to all the strata composing us” (*Thousand* 208), they are arguing for a model that accounts for the contingent composition of individual and social group alike, as apparently stable entities at either scale are rendered contingent by the fraught relationships between internal and external forces.

Larger scale assemblages, however, are unstable not only as a result of the internal fracture and instability of their constituents, but also because they are capable of being the momentarily emergent components of assemblages on still larger scales. Since assemblages are intrinsically unstable entities – composed of elements that are, themselves, made up of smaller-scale assemblages, but which are also part of other macro-scale assemblages and can become parts of others – conceiving of group activity in terms of assemblages foregrounds dynamism. It is in the discussion of the movements of assemblages’ constituents within and between assemblages that Deleuze raises the concepts of territorialization, deterritorialization, and reterritorialization. These variants of the term “territorialization” are used to discuss the movements into and out of an assemblage, whether it is geological, animal, or social in nature. According to the schema, “territorialization” signifies the physical process of being made a part of an assemblage; “reterritorialization” is used to designate either a move from one assemblage

into another or a move back into an earlier assemblage;<sup>4</sup> and “deterritorialization” refers to either a move from a particular assemblage, or the removal of an element from participation in the territorial economy altogether. The terms involved in the function of deterritorialization – which Deleuze and Guattari come to label as D, and also term a “line of flight” (e.g., in Deleuze & Parnet 40) – are thus inseparable from territorialization and reterritorialization:

the territory itself is inseparable from vectors of deterritorialization working it from within: either because the territory is supple and “marginal,” in other words, itinerant, or because the territorial assemblage itself opens onto and is carried off by other types of assemblages. Second, D is in turn inseparable from correlative reterritorializations. D is never simple, but always multiple and composite: not only because it participates in various forms at the same time, but also because it converges distinct speeds and movements on the basis of which one may assign at a given moment a “deterritorialized element” and a “deterritorializing element.” Now, reterritorialization as an original operation does not express a return to the territory, but rather these differential relations internal to D itself, this multiplicity internal to the line of flight[.] (*Thousand* 509)

While labelling a particular event as a territorialization, deterritorialization, or reterritorialization provides a sense of coherence to the terminology, such coherence depends upon perspective. In other words, a particular event can be labeled with one of these terms only from the perspective of its membership in a particular assemblage, since what is a reterritorialization in one assemblage may simultaneously be a deterritorialization from another. Further, using the terms at all requires a foregrounding of the larger community of assemblages, as movements of

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<sup>4</sup> It should be noted, of course, that such moves can happen within a larger-scale assemblage, so that, while in a sense moving from one territory to another, the relation this suggests between these territories also signals a larger-scale assemblage, so that in another sense, reterritorializations can also be moves within a given territory.



(de/re)territorialization are only coherent within such an assemblage of assemblages. For this reason, Deleuze and Guattari consistently treat the terms as relative to one another, so that the same process can be viewed as one or another, depending on the perspective in question:

How could movements of deterritorialization and processes of reterritorialization not be relative, always connected, caught up in one another? The orchid deterritorializes by forming an image, a tracing of a wasp; but the wasp reterritorializes on that image. The wasp is nevertheless deterritorialized, becoming a piece in the orchid's reproductive apparatus. But it reterritorializes the orchid by transporting its pollen. Wasp and orchid, as heterogeneous elements, form a rhizome. (Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand* 10)

A rhizome is thus unlike a tree, in that the roots of a rhizome can connect with one another at any point and do not directly follow a central node. The metaphor of the rhizome is put to use, here, to emphasize the extent to which neither wasp nor orchid can be mapped solely by their own properties, for these properties are shaped by the relationship they are involved in. At the same time, the relationship between wasp and orchid is also unable to explain the nature of the two entities wholly. Further, the processes of (de/re)territorialization are accompanied by processes of coding and decoding that manage which phenomena and elements of assemblages take on collective semiotic significance within an assemblage as processes of (de/re)territorialization are underway. Activity unfolds along two vectors – group membership and signification – and is thus treated as a “double articulation” as the two elements speak to and enfold one another.<sup>5</sup> The exteriority of relations means that interactions between wasp and orchid never resolve the two into a single entity – and this is truer still of human social assemblages. While both are rooted in dynamism, and while human social assemblages are, to a certain extent, also grounded in

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<sup>5</sup> For a more detailed explanation of Deleuze and Guattari's double articulation, see Massumi 51.

biological adaptation, the dynamism that is often most apparent in interpersonal interactions is grounded in the instability of social rather than of biological constructs. Deleuze and Guattari are generally interested in “becoming” over “being” (e.g. Colebrook 2-4), but the frequency of becomings, along with the extent to which the exteriority of relations prevent purely social “becoming” from transpiring on a single vector, foreground the processes of (de/re)territorialization. As a result, any discussion of social assemblages requires keeping track of both the group and signifying aspects of membership in multiple assemblages, whether those assemblages are active or virtual at a given moment.

### **DeLanda and Realist Assemblage**

Though Manuel DeLanda’s model of assemblage theory largely follows Deleuze and Guattari’s, DeLanda revises the earlier model in significant ways, especially in regards to the idea of human social assemblage. My emphasis on the model of subjectivity present in Deleuze’s philosophy and in his collaborations with Guattari foregrounds a less prominent element of that work. Such an emphasis risks eliding the fact that Deleuze and Guattari are predominantly focused on assemblages of human *and* non-human components, or assemblages that function as historical actors despite being composed of what would ordinarily be considered inert matter. DeLanda, however, spends more time explicitly addressing the dynamics of human social assemblages, and in this, he draws on the historical philosophy of Fernand Braudel. In approaching society as a “set of sets,” Braudel suggests a model of relationality similar to a matryoshka doll, where “any given social reality we may observe in isolation is itself contained in some greater set; that as a collection of variables, it requires and implies the existence of other collections of variables outside itself” (Braudel 459). What appears to be a coherent entity from one perspective is always a set of other entities that would appear coherent from other

perspectives. This vision of society is not dissimilar from Deleuze and Guattari's, and like them, Braudel uses the particular situation he is approaching at a given moment to set the appropriate scale for his analysis. There is a recognition in Braudel's philosophy that focusing on one social scale is more or less arbitrary, and that doing so can only explain a part of what is necessarily multivalent social phenomena – hence his value for DeLanda.

While Braudel is content to view the scale of a particular analysis as contingent on the particular angle by which a historian approaches reality for a given purpose – “For practical purposes of course, this totality has to be split up into smaller sets for convenience of observation. Otherwise, how could such a mass of material be handled?” (Braudel 459) – DeLanda will work to establish ways of determining which scale should be used in which situations. DeLanda proposes a model of “redundant causality” as a way to determine the proper source of an action according to the scale on which the agent or actor is placed:

In the explanation of a concrete social process it may not be immediately clear whether the causal actors are the micro-components or the macro-whole. The ambiguity can be eliminated if there are *many equivalent explanations* of the process in question at the micro-level [...]. In other words, we may be justified in explaining the emerging coalition as the result of the interaction between entire communities if an explanation of the micro-details is unnecessary because several such micro-causes would have led to a similar outcome. (*A New Philosophy* 37)

In short, when a given subject is not necessary for an action to take place, the action can be treated as though it originates not from the individual, but from some other assemblage. For example, consider the final exam given as part of the requirements for a specific English 110 class. If university requirements insist that all 110 classes must have final exams, then the

presence of the final exam in the 110 class in question is the result of action at the level of the university, not the individual; if the overall layout of final exams is determined by the relevant department, then the Department of English would be the source of the overall shape of this final exam; and if creating exams within these guidelines is ultimately the responsibility of a course's instructor, then the instructor of the English 110 class in question would be the source of the specific content. Recognizing that a valid historical actor can operate on any scale suggests to DeLanda that use of the term "individual" need not necessarily be confined to the scale of the subject or single person: "The term 'individual' has no preferential affinity for a particular scale (persons or organisms) but refers to any entity that is historically unique. Since all assemblages have this ontological status they all populate the same ontological plane" (*Assemblage* 13). In terms of the ontological status of individuals, the consequence is that "the human species" can be understood as an individual as much as a singular person can, so that "the human species as a whole exists 'alongside' the human organisms that compose it, alongside them in an ontological plane that is populated exclusively by historically individuated entities" (13). DeLanda's model thus provides both the specificity required to show degrees of dependence and independence of assemblages at each scale, and allows for an analysis of ontological independence and interdependence.

DeLanda also offers a significant revision to assemblage theory by regularizing Deleuze and Guattari's critical vocabulary. As DeLanda notes, Deleuze and Guattari appear, on the one hand, to define "assemblage" in several not wholly compatible ways, and on the other hand, to refer to things that must be assemblages using other terminology.<sup>6</sup> Perhaps the most immediately

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<sup>6</sup> There is also a problem with how the term "assemblage" translates from the French, "*agencement*":

The word in English fails to capture the meaning of the original *agencement*, a term that refers to the action of matching or fitting together a set of components (*agencer*), as well as to the result of such an action: an ensemble of parts that mesh together well. The English word used as translation captures only the second of

relevant instance emerges in Deleuze and Guattari's social ontology, which "includes only three levels: individuals, groups, and the social field" (*Assemblage* 4). DeLanda argues that "A more finely grained ontology, with many levels of social ensembles between the person and society as a whole" would "clarify and extend their ideas" (4). Part of the problem, here, is that all three levels – individual, group, and social field – appear to fit the broader idea of what "assemblages" are, given DeLanda's definition of "assemblage" as a "type of irreducible social whole produced by relations of exteriority,"<sup>7</sup> a whole that does not totalize its parts" (11). Since the human "individual" is, itself, a fractured and unstable assemblage of larval selves caught in the endless cycles of (de/re)territorialization behind subjective emergence, social wholes on all other scales, also operating under relations of exteriority as they do, would be similarly unstable and caught up in similar cycles of (de/re)territorialization. Therefore, dividing them into three distinct categories is both misleading and philosophically problematic, as it suggests differences that are only important when focusing on one social scale, while it arbitrarily limits the number of scales on which social assemblage can take place to three.

Having proposed the treatment of individual, group, and social field as assemblages operating on three scales, and having recognized that assemblages can also exist on any number of other scales, DeLanda then attempts to describe the processes behind the emergence of particular assemblages by, in his words, "parameterizing" a model of assemblage (verb) and assemblages (noun). DeLanda proposes this approach as a way to explain the fact that, according to Deleuze and Guattari, the terms they use to characterize several oppositions – "tree/rhizome, striated/smooth, molar/molecular, and stratum/assemblage" – can, in fact, "be transformed into

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these meanings, creating the impression that the concept refers to a product not a process. (*Assemblage Theory* 1)

<sup>7</sup> This is usually translated in Deleuze and Guattari as "exteriority of relations"; DeLanda reverses the order of the terms, but uses them in the same way.

one another” (*Assemblage* 3). DeLanda’s explanation for the possibility of such transformations is that all of the relevant terms in these pairs are, themselves, assemblages, and that their differences from one another can be captured according to the two parameters that govern their shape at a particular moment. DeLanda’s approach thus

yields a different version of assemblage, *a concept with knobs* that can be set to different values to yield either strata or assemblages (in the original sense). The coding parameter is one of the knobs we must build into the concept, the other being territorialization, a parameter measuring the degree to which the components of the assemblage have been subjected to a process of homogenisation, and the extent to which its defining boundaries have been delineated and made impermeable. A further modification to the original concept is that the parts matched together to form an ensemble are themselves treated as assemblages, equipped with their own parameters, so that at times we are dealing with assemblages of assemblages. [Therefore ...] communities and organisations, cities and countries, are shown to be amenable to a treatment in terms of assemblages. (3)

DeLanda follows Deleuze and Guattari’s description of what the variables of an assemblage should be: “The assemblage is tetravalent: (1) content and expression; (2) territoriality and deterritorialization” (*Thousand* 505). However, DeLanda uses “coding” to describe the informational component of an assemblage, and includes content and expression under this heading. DNA, in a simple instance, can be viewed as coding as it contains information used for the emergence of the organism.<sup>8</sup> As a variable parameter governing “the degree to which the

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<sup>8</sup> Deleuze and Guattari’s distinction between “collective assemblages of enunciation” (roughly, assemblages of language or discourse) and “machinic assemblages” (assemblages of material components) also disappears in DeLanda’s model, as the distinction between them is expressed by different settings of DeLanda’s “knobs.” In the simple case of “machinic assemblages” (assemblages of material components), the terms of the double articulation, (de/re)territorialization and coding correspond with the material and expressive components of an assemblage. Linguistic/discursive assemblages (“collective assemblages of enunciation”) offer a more complex case. While viewing discourse as assemblage is consistent with Deleuze and Guattari’s approach, the “stuff” discourse is made

components of the assemblage have been subjected to a process of homogenisation,” “territorialization” can be viewed as relating to the degree of interiority/exteriority of relations, or to the degree to which a member in a given assemblage is able to leave that assemblage to participate as a member of another. The metaphor of “knobs” emphasizes the enormous variety of both the types of assemblages possible and the scales on which assemblages can form.

In DeLanda’s model, the most important reason for parameterizing assemblages is to block the habitual reductionisms that create analytic biases, especially in the context of human social reality. DeLanda lists three types of reductionisms that should be avoided because they can limit the ability to perceive the true complexity of the interrelationships between groups and individuals: micro-reductionism, which treats society “as a mere aggregate, that is, as a whole without properties that are more than the sum of its parts”; macro-reductionism, which understands individuals as “mere products of the society in which they are born”; and meso-reductionism, which treats “an intermediate level, such as praxis, the true core of social reality, with both individual agency and social structure being byproducts of this fundamental level” (*New Philosophy* 4-5). DeLanda argues that guarding against such forms of reductionism by remaining cognizant of the relative autonomy of each scale “allows the integration of the valuable insights that different social scientists have developed while working at a specific spatiotemporal scale” (119). This approach, DeLanda insists, enables drawing together various theorists who only analyze activity on particular scales to form “a chorus that does not

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of could be considered to be the informational component of another assemblage. In the case of the linguistic or discursive assemblage, (de/re)territorialization would be concerned with the changing relationships between discursive elements, while coding would be concerned with those elements that signal or demand such movement. Territorialization and coding are defined by their broader abstract forms; as I am mostly interested in subjective and social assemblage, I find it useful to think of them as the terms and plans for group membership being provided by coding, and the things that are pressured by the codes to move into a particular pattern being processes of (de/re)territorialization (an increased degree of coding gives more rules, and increasing the degree of territorialization results in an increased pressure on something to conform with the plans set out by the codes, resulting in an assemblage of particular dimensions containing specific elements).

harmonize its different components but interlocks them while respecting their heterogeneity” (119). Importantly, DeLanda’s desire not to arbitrarily limit analysis to a given scale or scales means acknowledging that the individual person should be seen as a valid unit of analysis: “Since we reject macro-reductionism, we must take individual persons seriously, as long as the subjectivity of each person is conceived as emerging from the interactions between sub-personal components” (*Assemblage* 26). While a model of the subject must be extracted from Deleuze and Guattari’s model (or models), and while the scale of the individual person/subject is the scale for which DeLanda provides his least-detailed examination, his parameterized model and goal of eliminating reductionist tendencies from assemblage theory give a clear indication of how the individual person should be treated in assemblage theory: as an assemblage that is a component of larger-scale assemblages but is also composed itself of smaller-scale assemblages.

DeLanda also explicitly analyzes the role of conflict on group formation that can be extended to considerations of assemblage-based models of subjectivity. DeLanda notes that “Conflict [...] tends to increase the degree of territorialization of communities, a fact that may be captured conceptually by a change in the setting of the parameter” (*Assemblage* 22). In other words, the threat of an outside force tends to draw communities together as they unite against it – a process that increases the homogenization of the participants in the community. Yet, as becomes clear in DeLanda’s discussion of social movements, when two assemblages become locked in a pattern of reactionary response, the actions of each come to define the behaviour of the other to such an extent that it is sometimes necessary to view the warring groups as the components of a larger scale social assemblage: “a movement typically breeds a countermovement, both of which should be considered component parts of the overall



assemblage” (*New Philosophy* 59). A similar instance emerges in the natural world as organisms evolve according to particular niches:

Predators and their prey, for example, can enter into “arms races” in which any inheritable improvement in the ability to evade predators or capture prey acts as a selection pressure for the development of counter-measures. When this mutual stimulation is maintained over many generations, predator and prey species can force each other to adaptively modify their genetic identity, and to be carried away by a mutual line of flight. (*Assemblage* 160)

Though DeLanda is discussing such changes in terms of deterritorializations, the fact that the change takes place by means of “a mutual line of flight” suggests that what is a deterritorialization from the perspective of each individual species is simultaneously a territorialization in a larger-scale predator/prey assemblage. Though the two can still be treated as distinct, in such a case, predator and prey suggest a single larger-scale assemblage. The question, for DeLanda, can be determined according to which – predator and prey as separate assemblages, or a predator/prey assemblage – is the valid historical actor from the perspective of a particular type of or context for analysis. For example, the flight path of single bird in a murmuration of starlings might be related not only to the starling’s own calculations of its individual best interests, but also to social behaviours that have evolved in response to the threat posed by a particular predator. The importance of oppositional assemblages of this sort lies in their indication of another legitimate scale of analysis necessary to consider when viewing group membership, even within smaller-scale assemblages.

## Language and Literature

DeLanda also provides a more complete and explicit assemblage-based theory of language than do Deleuze and Guattari, and this allows DeLanda to treat language as integral to social assemblage. DeLanda offers a model of language that treats it as both emergent from social reality and as a constraint on the continued social reality that gave rise to it:

First, words and sentences are component parts of many social assemblages, such as interpersonal networks and institutional organisations, interacting not only with the material components of those assemblages but also with non-linguistic expressive components. Second, some linguistic entities (religious discourses, written constitutions) have the capacity to code all the components of a given assemblage. (*Assemblage Theory* 51)

What may begin as more or less arbitrary utterances in a given social context can come to have a role in governing how territorialization functions in the assemblage that first enabled those utterances. DeLanda follows Deleuze and Guattari in referring to such cases where all meanings are seemingly determined within a given assemblage as “overcoding.” This is the opposite extreme of language used merely as a variable by a given subject. It is not only in overcoded assemblages, though, that language can function as a decisive parameter of an assemblage, and DeLanda also notes that, though it is convenient to discuss language as operating on “three different levels – a language as a variable of a social assemblage; a language as a parameter of a social assemblage; and a given language as an assemblage – it is clear that in any concrete case all three levels operate simultaneously and influence one another” (*Assemblage* 52). Even when treating language as a variable of an assemblage, it is necessary to note that variables do not emerge apropos of nothing, and repeated or habitual material circumstances can lead to a

variable becoming a parameter of social assemblages. In such instances, what begins as an arbitrary expression can become an expected prompt in the emergent social and material context of a social assemblage (e.g. “When event x occurred, Paul said, ‘P,’ expecting Sally to respond, ‘Q’”). Obviously, even in an assemblage that is not overcoded, there can still be statements that are either expected or forbidden, and uttering or failing to utter them could have consequences. It is in this context that Deleuze and Guattari introduce the idea of the “order-word,” which is then taken up by DeLanda: “order-words refer to the capacities of statements to create commitments [...]. On the other hand, order-words are not related to the communicative functions of language,[...] but to the *impersonal transmission* of statements” (*Assemblage* 54). The order-word has two related functions: “the statement gives an order (commands) and establishes an order (positions bodies in a force field). The order-word culminates in transformations that place the concerned body or bodies in a position to carry out implicit obligations or follow a present direction” (Massumi 31-2). Because of the dual nature of the order-word, it can be thought of as an interpellation designed to elicit a specific response, and thus one that exists to solidify and enforce the borders of an assemblage.

While DeLanda treats language as eventually coming to constrain the social realities from which it emerges, he also treats language, itself, as assemblage. Again, DeLanda is following in the footsteps of Deleuze and Guattari: “This is the first division of every assemblage: it is simultaneously and inseparably a machinic assemblage and an assemblage of enunciation. In each case, it is necessary to ascertain both what is said and what is done” (*Thousand* 504). Yet, despite the obvious debt DeLanda’s model of social and linguistic assemblage owes to Deleuze and Guattari, it is important to note that DeLanda has dropped the distinction between machinic assemblages (those composed of material components) and assemblages of enunciation (those

composed of language); refusing to acknowledge this distinction allows DeLanda to focus more specifically on the rules that govern all assemblages, whether their component parts are words, people, people using words, animals, inert matter, or any combination of these. While DeLanda's focus on the rules governing assemblage, regardless of an assemblage's material components, suggests that his approach is more abstract than Deleuze and Guattari's, DeLanda is less interested in engaging in general discussions about how languages and assemblages are or could be than he is in looking at historically specific instances: "we must replace the reified generality 'language' with a population of individual dialects coexisting and interacting with individual standard languages. Each member of the population can then be examined for its composition" (*Assemblage* 52). Again, using DeLanda's criteria, a language can only be treated as an assemblage if it can be shown to be a valid historical actor, with precise events leading to its inception and evolution – which is how he engages with Latin (see *Assemblage* 58+).

But while DeLanda's model revises Deleuze and Guattari's in important ways, the latter philosophers remain important to this project not just because of the debt DeLanda's model owes to theirs, but because of the theory of literature Deleuze and Guattari provide in their final co-written work, *What is Philosophy?*,<sup>9</sup> in which they treat art (including literature), science, and philosophy as particular types of responses to the chaos of human existence. Philosophy, for Deleuze and Guattari, "extracts *concepts* (which must not be confused with general or abstract ideas)" (24).<sup>10</sup> Concepts are here understood as more than terms: they are terms that form new discursive constellations by connecting to other concepts in novel ways, so that they create new

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<sup>9</sup> *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie?* (1991).

<sup>10</sup> While they discuss the role of philosophers in terms of extraction, it is elsewhere described simply as creation, though in their view the creation of a concept is synonymous with its extraction from a virtual plane, so that it is equally true for Deleuze and Guattari that the philosopher "is the potentiality of the concept" and that "philosophy is the discipline that involves *creating* concepts" (*What* 5).

possibilities for speech and thought. It is in this sense that “[t]he greatness of a philosophy is measured by the nature of the events to which its concepts summon us or that it enables us to release in concepts” (34). Science, on the other hand, “extracts *prospects* (propositions that must not be confused with judgments)” (24) and because it focuses on material reality, it “concerns itself only with states of affairs and their conditions” (33). This rather dim view of the purpose of science<sup>11</sup> sees its focus as comparatively superficial, almost as though it is connected merely to “the given” of existence rather than to the concepts that make reality and existence more than superficially comprehensible. Art, on the other hand, “preserves [...] *a bloc of sensations, that is to say, a compound of percepts and affects*” (163-4). By giving material form to the sensations, the artist does something more than merely record lived experiences, for when recorded, “Sensations, percepts,<sup>12</sup> and affects are *beings* whose validity lies in themselves and exceeds any lived. They could be said to exist in the absence of man because man, as he is caught in stone, on the canvas, or by words, is himself a compound of percepts and affects. The work of art is a being of sensation and nothing else; it exists in itself” (164). Their description of the purpose of art thus emphasizes the ontological independence of art from a reader or viewer, and is worlds away from Jean-Paul Sartre’s view of “the literary object [as] a peculiar top which exists only in movement” (“What” 50), for little seems to be lost by applying Deleuze and Guattari’s description of art to literature if nobody is actually reading the text.

All the same, the purposes of art, science, and philosophy can be related to the types of influences they exert on the emergence of the Deleuzian subject described above. Science

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<sup>11</sup> In fact, DeLanda distances himself from this model of philosophy, art, and science because he does not agree with such a characterization of science (*Intensive* 216-21).

<sup>12</sup> Percepts should not be conflated with perceptions, here, for they are limited to more material phenomenon: light rays entering the eye are percepts; the pupil dilating and the eyes squinting are affects; and while the wish that someone would dim the lights could be regarded as an affect, Deleuze and Guattari are more interested in the former two examples, as an emergent assemblage of larval subjects is already a factor in the third example.

imposes order on “the given,” the interpretation of which is instrumental to the emergence of a particular assemblage of larval subjectivities. Philosophy influences subjective emergence by altering the constellation of concepts used to relate the experiences of “the given” to the subject’s memories and habits. Art supplements “the given” by adding experiences to introduce and enable new percepts and affects (or new combinations of percepts and affects) that the subject would not otherwise have access to, and thereby expands the perceived reality in response to which assemblages of larval subjectivities form and emerge into an apparent subject. The relationship between literature and memory is particularly crucial here. Since “memory” is instrumental to how literature in particular functions; since memory is at once crucial to the question of *which* assemblage of larval subjectivities emerges under which circumstances; and since memory ultimately provides material that is processed with relation to the current moment, literature can further influence the emergence of subjectivity by drawing attention to different memories while also rendering the process of subjective emergence, itself, as an object of perception. As Deleuze and Guattari assert, “The monument’s action is not memory but fabulation. We write not with childhood memories but through blocs of childhood that are the becoming-child of the present” (*What* 167-8). Such a “becoming-child” makes the processes of becoming discursive even as it influences the becoming of the present moment by making new connections to childhood and ongoing processes of becoming.

Deleuze and Guattari’s model of philosophy, science, and art also recognizes the centrality of subjective experience at least to the extent that it treats the three activities as responses to the existentialist void as influentially described over a hundred years earlier by Friedrich Nietzsche. As Deleuze and Guattari explain, “What defines thought in its three great forms – art, science, and philosophy – is always confronting chaos” (*What* 197). Like

Nietzsche's model in *The Birth of Tragedy*, Deleuze and Guattari treat the goal of the three areas as finding ways to endure encounters with chaos and infinity, where philosophy, science, and art represent different strategies for survival.<sup>13</sup> Philosophy is that which imposes order on chaos and tames the infinite by creating a system in which everything is ordered, sensible, and, in some sense, part of everything else: "philosophy wants to save the infinite by giving it consistency: it lays out a plane of immanence that, through the action of conceptual personae, takes events or consistent concepts to infinity" (197). The term "immanent" here, as in most poststructuralist philosophy, draws specifically on Spinoza's conception of God as present within or distributed throughout (rather than as transcendent to) material reality,<sup>14</sup> and it suggests that isolated terms are connected to prevent them from dissolving into insignificance when they come into contact with the infinite. Science, too, attempts to tame the infinite by imposing order: "it lays out a plane of simply undefined coordinates that each time, through the action of partial observers, defines states of affairs, functions, or referential propositions" so that, in a sense, it "relinquishes the infinite in order to gain reference" (197). In short, the strategy of science is to select arbitrarily the reference points from which it will work. The chaotic and infinite fade from the perspective of these reference points as they fall outside the scope of the propositions that thus order reality. In this way, Deleuze and Guattari argue, science writes chaos and infinity out of existence by creating closed discourses in which they have no place. Art, for Deleuze and Guattari, is special, as it provides the only way to survive the infinite that does not involve taming or obscuring it: "Art wants to create the finite that restores the infinite: it lays out a plane of composition that, in turn, through the action of aesthetic figures, bears monuments or

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<sup>13</sup> It is important to note that the three categories Deleuze and Guattari present are divided in accordance with the impulse behind the creation of a particular work and do not necessarily correspond to the conventional boundaries between these disciplines.

<sup>14</sup> See Deleuze's *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy* (*Spinoza - Philosophie pratique*) for more details.

composite sensations” (197). Hence, art rescues chaos and the infinite. Though works of art are finite, and are, therefore, incapable of containing these forces, they are able to refer to chaos without shuffling it into order, and they are able to point to the infinite without subduing it according to a philosophical system or containing it within a narrowly defined view of reality.

### **Limitations and Suggested Additions**

Given his influence on Deleuze, Nietzsche’s description of the existential void in *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872)<sup>15</sup> as the Dionysian should be read into Deleuze and Guattari’s treatment of “chaos”; though Deleuze and Guattari provide a model of philosophy, science, and art that leans heavily on Nietzsche’s account, they stop short of considering his treatment of the Apollonian and Dionysian as an account of group formation. Deleuze comes closest to doing so in *Nietzsche and Philosophy*,<sup>16</sup> in which he notes the productive tension “between primitive unity and individuation” where Apollo represents the latter and in which Dionysus acts as the force that “shatters the individual,” with the result being “the superabundance of unique being or universal willing” and an “antithesis” that demands resolution (11-12).<sup>17</sup> Read thus, Nietzsche signals what I read as the existentialist basis of group membership and formation – and, indeed, of civilization itself.

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<sup>15</sup> *Die Geburt der Tragödie aus dem Geiste der Musik*.

<sup>16</sup> *Nietzsche et la philosophie* (1962).

<sup>17</sup> The full passage suggests the territorializations implicit in the duality the figures represent:

The contradiction in the *Birth of Tragedy* is between primitive unity and individuation, willing and appearance, life and suffering. [...] Apollo is the divine incarnation of the principle of individuation. He constructs the appearance of appearance, the beautiful appearance, the dream or the plastic image and is thus freed from suffering [...], he *obliterates* pain. Dionysus, on the contrary, returns to primitive unity, he shatters the individual, drags him into the great shipwreck and absorbs him into individual being. Thus he reproduces the contradiction as the pain of individuation but resolves them in a higher pleasure, by making us participate in the superabundance of unique being or universal willing. Dionysus and Apollo are therefore not opposed as the terms of a contradiction but rather as two antithetical ways of resolving it; Apollo mediately, in the contemplation of the plastic image, Dionysus immediately in the reproduction, in the musical symbol of the will. Dionysus is like the background on which Apollo embroiders beautiful appearances; but beneath Apollo Dionysus rumbles. The antithesis of the two must therefore be resolved[.] (*Nietzsche and Philosophy* 11-2)



In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche defines his sense of “Dionysian” and “Apollonian,”<sup>18</sup> which come to symbolize the fundamental principles that are responsible for understanding reality and, in particular, the driving force of chaos.<sup>19</sup> Disorder is thus encapsulated by the term “Dionysian,” which refers directly to the Greek god, Dionysus, “a personification of the vine and of the exhilaration produced by the juice of the grape.[...] Dionysus was believed to have died a violent death, but to have been brought to life again; his sufferings, death, and resurrection were enacted in his sacred rights” (Frazer 396-7). As Bernd Magnus and Kathleen Higgins point out, “[t]he Dionysian principle [...] presents reality as a tumultuous flux in which individuality is overwhelmed by the dynamics of a living whole” (22), an experience that is at once unifying and isolating. On the one hand, the Dionysian has the power to unite people through a sense of “‘primordial unity,’ an all-encompassing being that is ultimately incomprehensible” (Safranski 79). Glimpses of the fundamental unity of all things, however disruptive, allow the individual to step “beyond his [sic] confines to blend with nature. He emerges from his detachment to join with his fellow man in the ‘orgiastic’ experience of love and the frenzy of the masses” (67). It is the realization that all beings live equally meaningless lives that provides a profound sense of unity with one’s fellow beings, while also making it possible to throw caution to the wind and enjoy one’s pointless existence – and reasoning of this sort connects Dionysian truth to orgiastic Dionysian cults. On the other hand, the Dionysian can cause a depression that is so absolute that it results in complete paralysis. As Nietzsche explains, to perceive Dionysian truth is “to recognize that all that comes into being must be ready for a sorrowful end; we are forced to look

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<sup>18</sup> Walter Kauffman translates these terms as “Apollinian” and “Dionysiac.” However, “Apollonian” and “Dionysian” are the more common translations.

<sup>19</sup> Though the above describes the philosophical significance of these words, they are also used throughout *The Birth of Tragedy* to discuss various specific elements of art and life, including of music (e.g. 40, 46), painting (e.g. 45), emotional states (e.g. 46), mythology (e.g. 48-9), poetry (e.g. 50-1, 55), will (e.g. 52), and the Greek chorus (e.g. 56-67).

into the terrors of the individual existence” (*Birth* 104). Though Nietzsche insists that “we are not to become rigid with fear” (104) when we glimpse the Dionysian, this is not easily accomplished, for “[k]nowledge kills action” because “true knowledge, an insight into the horrible truth, outweighs any motive for action, both in Hamlet and in the Dionysian man” (60). The problem here is simple: with too much Dionysian truth, an individual cannot imagine any reason to bother doing anything. For Nietzsche, this creates a serious predicament, since the Dionysian is simultaneously able to serve life by providing people with the most fundamental and powerful sense of connectedness, and to hinder life by bringing about paralytic depression.

Nietzsche attempts to rescue the unity offered by the Dionysian by viewing the Apollonian as having the potential to forestall this paralysis through its associations with “the veils of illusion” (60). The curative, ordering sense of the term derives from the Greek god, Apollo, “the master musician who delights Olympus as he plays on his golden lyre; the lord too of the silver bow [...]; the Healer, as well, who first taught men the healing art.[... H]e is the God of Light, in whom is no darkness at all, and so he is the God of Truth” (Hamilton 29). At a fundamental level, “[t]he Apollonian principle conceive[s of] the individual as sufficiently separate from the rest of reality to be able to contemplate it dispassionately” (Magnus and Higgins 22). Yet, for Nietzsche, distinctions between people and their experiences are nothing more than fictions humans create to trick themselves into a false sense of security, believing they are more separate from an indifferent reality than they actually are. It is for this reason that Nietzsche discusses the Apollonian in ways that highlight the fact that it is necessarily illusory, though at times also a necessary illusion:

The beautiful illusion of the dream worlds, in the creation of which every man [sic] is truly an artist is the prerequisite of all plastic art, and, as we shall see, of an important

part of poetry also. In our dreams we delight in the immediate understanding of figures; all forms speak to us; there is nothing unimportant or superfluous. But even when this dream reality is most intense, we still have, glimmering through it, the sensation that it is *mere appearance*[.] (34)

Here, Nietzsche compares the Apollonian with dreaming to emphasize its dislocation from material reality. A systematic ordering and a process of mediating chaos by placing things in a cognitively mapped – or at least mappable – reality, the Apollonian speaks to an experience delineated and defined by a closed system governed by internally consistent rules. For Nietzsche, artistic creation can utilize such a dynamic, for the desire to order chaos is seen to be driven by an Apollonian impulse, and the ability to act at all requires sufficient shielding from the horrific paralysis of Dionysian knowledge. Civilization becomes possible only when the individual finds a way to impose order and meaning onto the intrinsically chaotic and meaningless state of existence. In this sense, the Apollonian, like the Dionysian, has the ability to unite individuals. It is, nonetheless, possible to identify “the isolated Apollonian individual” (D. Robinson 66) because, while the Apollonian brings individuals together, it connects them only superficially and through a kind of artifice. Ultimately, the Apollonian remains unreal, and as soon something appears outside of a supposedly complete and closed Apollonian reality, the Dionysian has the ability to undermine the perceived validity of the Apollonian, rendering it “mere appearance.”

For Nietzsche, all social life is dependent on some balance of Apollonian and Dionysian impulses, and each civilization provides a unique mixture of Apollonian and Dionysian elements. Though Nietzsche is ostensibly focused on the interrelation of Apollonian and Dionysian principles in Greek tragedy, he finally deploys his analysis to ask, “what system of blinders does each culture rely on to shut out the threatening power of the Dionysian and to channel essential

Dionysian energies?” (Safranski 80). Nietzsche poses this question to uncover “the innermost secrets of each culture [... and to trace] the surreptitious ways of the will to live [...]. To keep its creatures ‘clinging to life,’ it wraps them in illusions” (Nietzsche quoted in Safranski 80).

According to Nietzsche, modern civilization<sup>20</sup> is characterized by a dangerous imbalance of Apollonian and Dionysian elements. Nietzsche traces the problem at the heart of this imbalance back to Socrates: “A defender of reason to an irrational degree, Socrates taught that reason could penetrate reality to the point that it could correct reality’s flaws” (Magnus and Higgins 23).

“Reason,” in this sense, refers to the necessarily illusory ordering of chaos inherent to the Apollonian, which has become the apparent solution to modernity itself. For Nietzsche, modern individuals are oblivious to Dionysian reality, and this “repression of vulnerability” to the Dionysian through an overinvestment in the Apollonian principle is “psychologically disastrous” (Magnus and Higgins 24). Therefore, for Nietzsche, the scientific framework for understanding the world is in danger of being viewed as entirely fraudulent and thus destroyed rather than productively balanced by an encounter with the Dionysian.

Though Nietzsche believes a healthy civilization requires an equitable relationship between Apollonian and Dionysian principles, he notes the difficulty balancing the two:

From the vantage point of everyday consciousness, the Dionysian is horrifying. By the same token, the Dionysian perspective regards everyday reality as horrifying. Conscious life moves between both outlooks [...]. One is simultaneously transported by the Dionysian, with which life must retain contact to avoid becoming desolate, and dependent on the protective devices of civilization to avoid being sacrificed to the disintegrating power of the Dionysian. (Safranski 80)

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<sup>20</sup> Obviously, it is worth noting that Nietzsche is writing in the 1870s. Given Nietzsche’s characterizations of the role of science in society, though, his characterization may have become more apt since.

The crux of the issue is simple: both Apollonian and Dionysian are necessary for a civilization to thrive, but the two principles are largely incompatible. From a Dionysian perspective, the Apollonian is mere fiction, and from an Apollonian perspective, the Dionysian is repulsively horrific and irrational. Nonetheless, both are necessary if the subject is to have a meaningful life in a healthy society: the Dionysian is necessary for its presentation of what life truly is and for its ability to connect fellow sufferers in profound ways; yet civilization cannot be given over entirely to the Dionysian, for this would foreground the pointlessness of existence to such an extent that it would be difficult to accomplish anything; and, conversely, the Apollonian cannot be adopted exclusively, for it can only be justified by the Dionysian, as the terrors of Dionysian truth are the reason civilization is necessary.

Nietzsche's approach thus provides the vocabulary and the rationale for discussing the existentialist basis for group formation and membership that becomes especially important when discussing the experience of the subject as he or she participates in assemblages. The compatibility of Nietzsche's model with assemblage theory is striking, and is suggested by the fact that one could align "Apollonian" and "coding" as the forces that establish order and provide the expressive components that give significance to group membership (as a matter of fact, the Apollonian would appear to be another name for coding specifically operating in a human social assemblage), as well as "Dionysian" and "territorialization" as being concerned with the chaotic and meaningless material components of assemblage that are given shape by their contact with coding or the Apollonian. But whereas "coding" and "territorialization" treat the features of assemblage in abstract terms defined by the features they share at all scales, Nietzsche's terminology highlights the important psychological impact of territorialization and coding, and it shows that *how* these processes unfold – *what* is territorialized according to *what* coding – can

greatly affect how successful social assemblages are at providing subjects with the needs that most powerfully demand participation in groups in the first place. Whereas the Dionysian creates the possibility for the most powerful unity, it requires the dissolution of individuality into an immanent relationship with the universe, breaking down (by rendering irrelevant) the structures that establish and reinforce social assemblages.<sup>21</sup> Hence, recognition of the Dionysian can be a powerful force that shapes the processes of assemblage in several ways. It can produce radical deterritorializations, as the Dionysian individual recognizes the contingency and inadequacy of social assemblages, and can thus cause the individual to take the conditions of group membership less seriously. It can also increase the sense of importance of group membership, and can act as a powerful territorialization, even leading individuals to take part in groups they would not otherwise join, frightening them into the Apollonian. Significantly, this latter response to the spectre of the Dionysian relies upon the Apollonian components of group membership to shore up individual identity and meaning.

Whereas Deleuze's model of assemblage theory is compatible with a model of group formation as predicated on the relationship between Apollonian and Dionysian forces,<sup>22</sup> the role

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<sup>21</sup> Deleuze recognizes the relationship between the Dionysian and subjective immanence to be an important element of Nietzsche's philosophy:

The great discovery of Nietzsche's philosophy, which marks his break with Schopenhauer and goes under the name of the will to power or the Dionysian world, is the following: no doubt the I and the Self must be replaced by an undifferentiated [sic] abyss, but this abyss is neither an impersonal nor an abstract Universal beyond individuation. On the contrary, it is the I and the self which are the abstract universals. They must be replaced, but in and by individuation, in the direction of the individuating factors which consume them and which constitute the fluid world of Dionysus. What cannot be replaced is individuation itself. Beyond the self and the I we find not the impersonal but the individual and its factors, individuation and its fields, individual and its pre-individual singularities. (*Difference* 258)

However, he does not discuss the Apollonian, or the relationship between Dionysian and Apollonian, as an important element in the assemblage of groups or the creation of group identity.

<sup>22</sup> Such a focus on the relationship is not, by any means, incompatible with Deleuze's version of subject formation. Consider, for instance, his discussion of the creative role of the subject:

We are also subjects in another respect, that is, in (and by) the moral, aesthetic, or social judgment. In this sense, the subject reflects and is reflected upon. It extracts from that which affects it in general a power independent of the actual exercise, that is, a pure function, and then transcends its own partiality. Consequently, artifice and invention have been made possible. The subject invents; it is the maker of artifice. Such is the dual power of subjectivity: to believe and to invent, to assume the secret powers and to

of the Dionysian in the formation of an assemblage suggests problems with DeLanda's insistence on a strictly realist ontology.<sup>23</sup> For example, while the Dionysian can have important (de/re)territorializing roles in a given assemblage, it is difficult for DeLanda's realist ontology to discuss coding, or even failures of coding, with reference to the Dionysian. While DeLanda is only interested in analyzing historically valid entities (on whatever scale),<sup>24</sup> my treatment of *The Birth of Tragedy* in terms of group formation emphasizes that individuals are able to find significance from membership in groups they perceive to exist, even where DeLanda would not consider those groups to be valid historical actors. Rather than providing a model that would be able to talk about the mechanisms by which people move between what are, in many cases, imagined communities, DeLanda argues for a model of realism that would "assert the autonomy of social entities from the conceptions we have of them. To say that social entities have a reality that is conception-independent is simply to assert that the theories, models and conceptions we

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presuppose abstract or distinct powers. In these two senses, the subject is normative; it creates norms or general rules. (*Empiricism* 86)

In this treatment, the subject is largely defined by Apollonian powers to create artifice as a way to transcend the limits of its own existence.

<sup>23</sup> DeLanda and Harman provide a convenient breakdown of the different forms of realism (the Rs), and how these relate to corresponding versions of anti-realism (the As):

- R1/A1 The world is not/is dependent on the mind.
- R2/A2 Truth is/is not correspondence
- R3/A3 There is/is not one true, complete description of how the world is.
- R4/A4 Any statement is/is not necessarily either true or untrue.
- R5/A5 Knowledge is/is not passive with respect to what it knows.
- R6/A6 The human subject does/does not have a fixed character.
- R7/A7 The relation of the human subject with the world is not/is a privileged relation for philosophy.
- R8/A8 The world is not/is a holistic entity in which everything is inextricably related.
- R9/A9 Subjective experience is not/is linguistically structured. (DeLanda and Harman 37)

<sup>24</sup> It should be noted that, despite his failure to provide an account of failures of coding in the face of the Dionysian, DeLanda recognizes the centrality of significance to the individual existence, and this suggests the power of the hunger for significance over subject formation and group membership:

Conscious experience must indeed be *meaningful* to a subject. But the word 'meaningful' has two different senses, exemplified by the phrases 'a meaningful statement' and 'a meaningful life.' In the first case we are dealing with *signification* (semantic content) in the second with *significance* (relevance, importance). Something without signification is nonsensical; something without significance is trivial. (DeLanda in DeLanda and Harman 32)

use to study them may be objectively wrong, that is, that they may fail to capture the real history and internal dynamics of those entities” (*New Philosophy* 1). A social abstraction such as “patriarchy” – or, in many cases, “the nation” – can hardly be an ontologically valid assemblage in a realist sense if such fundamental elements as the identity of its members can produce different but simultaneously and equally valid realities. But perhaps what matters more than ontological validity is that subjects believe themselves and others to be members of “the nation” and that this belief influences how they treat and are treated by others. Though it is an abstraction of which DeLanda does not approve, the nation nevertheless has a real role in governing subjectivity through interpellation: it has parameters of membership that are utilized and enforced, however vaguely and unevenly.

In addition, though DeLanda recognizes that assemblages contain expressive components, and that these components are able to code any word or action to make it particularly important within a given assemblage, the fact that such coding takes place does not answer the question of how an individual knows which assemblage he or she should act as a member of at any given moment. Part of the problem is that the same word or act can be “coded” – can be an expressive component (an utterance or act interpreted as significant within a particular assemblage) that plays a role “in fixing the identity of a whole” (*Assemblage* 22) – in different ways in different assemblages, so that the subject must undertake some sort of semiotic process to determine which assemblage he or she should see as immediately relevant to his or her subjectivity at a given moment. On the other hand, an active assemblage may be ambiguously or provisionally coded, so that the individual is stuck assessing whether or how a word or action should be coded within a particular assemblage. While participation in an assemblage is relatively easy to explain when assemblages are heavily coded, it is more difficult to account for



moments at which individual members of an assemblage are forced to act or speak without knowing whether or not they are behaving in accordance with group expectations, for there are cases where even knowing what the “expressive components” of a given assemblage are is a matter of interpretation. Such ambiguity can be present both within and between assemblages, for the appropriate relationships among different subjective roles are not necessarily set in stone (many a marriage has ended, for instance, as a result of differing opinions over whether a particular act – flirting, sex, etc. – is appropriate outside of the marriage or not). Interpretation is central to determining which acts or identities are or are not mutually exclusive, and which behaviours or expressions necessitate the end of participation in one assemblage to engage in activities through another. Further, that such ambiguity of coding can be present is true of both one’s own place, and the perceived place of others: while “is that an appropriate thing to say to a married woman?” and “what am I, as a married woman, to say?” are questions that may emerge, so are “is that an appropriate thing for a married man to say to me?” Such discussions turn on what assemblage one sees one’s self as acting within, what assemblage one sees one’s interlocutor as acting as a part of, what one sees as the appropriate relationship between these assemblages, and how “good” or “bad” a member of the appropriate assemblages one sees the self and the other. Even something like “degree of coding” – how high, to use DeLanda’s metaphor, the coding knob is tuned in a given assemblage – is up for negotiation in many assemblages, with no perspective possible that does not simply show a given individual’s apparent perception of that assemblage’s degree of coding (according to his or her behaviour exhibiting an evident understanding of its proper boundaries).

As a way to address the role of subjective interpretation of the semiotic components of a social assemblage, I am going to use Althusser’s account of interpellation as a model of the

experience of a subject undergoing (de/re)territorialization in a social assemblage. While Deleuze's discussion of larval subjects in *Difference and Repetition*<sup>25</sup> gives an indication of the mechanisms by which passive larval subjects become active subjects, Deleuze, Guattari, and DeLanda do not provide a term for the stages of this process, other than the abstract "territorialization." Relying solely on the term "territorialization" raises a difficulty when dealing with social assemblages, however, as the mechanisms which initiate (de/re)territorializations do not operate in quite the same way in the human social world as they would in other assemblages. While such differences are not important when considering the abstract processes underway in (de/re)territorializations, accounting for such mechanism is necessary to explain how subjects experience participation in a constellation of assemblages. Althusser's system is able to provide a vocabulary that foregrounds the subjective experiences of navigating assemblages and binds together multiple overlapping but distinct stages of social (de/re)territorialization: social event, interpretation of that event by a subject, subject formation via interpretation and response, and consequent group membership. In Althusser's system, ideology calls on individuals to act in a particular way, and by merely hearing the call individuals are transformed into subjects:

I shall then suggest that ideology "acts" or "functions" in such a way that it "recruits" subjects among the individuals (it recruits them all), or "transforms" the individuals into subjects (it transforms them all) by that very precise operation which I have called *interpellation* or hailing, and which can be imagined along the lines of the most commonplace every day police (or other) hailing: "Hey, you there!"

Assuming that the theoretical scene I have imagined takes place in the street, the hailed individual will turn around. By this mere one-hundred-and-eighty-degree physical

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<sup>25</sup> *Différence et répétition* (1968).

conversion, he becomes a *subject*. Why? Because he has recognized that the hail was “really” addressed to him, and that “it was *really him* who was hailed” (and not someone else). (Althusser 118)

Given, however, the individual’s ideologically determined position in multiple and simultaneous groups, “the hail” of the policeman which prompts the individual to respond as the subject must be understood from the perspective of assemblage theory as “the hail that is perceived”: the call as it is understood by the individual to be relevant to a particular assemblage. Through the reception of the hail, the subject is not merely a subject of ideology, but more specifically a component of a given assemblage. The role of perception and of affect in ongoing subjective becoming is what emerges from an assemblage theory-based approach to Althusserian conceptions of the operation of ideology. Such an approach is closer to Deleuze’s – and Hume’s – than DeLanda’s in the sense that it relies on an empiricist conception of reality but not necessarily a realist one. While Althusser argues that “What is represented in ideology is therefore not the system of the real relations which govern the existence of individuals, but the imaginary relation of those individuals to the real relations in which they live” (Althusser 111), I will not be using his model to argue an anti-realist or anti-materialist position – I am not, for instance, suggesting that individuals are members of groups which do not, in reality, exist. But I will draw attention to the fact that all that is necessary to generate the emergence of a new assemblage of larval subjects is that the existing assemblage of larval subjects *perceives* stimulus that they *interpret* as requiring a new mode of behaviour; from this perspective, DeLanda’s realism is problematic because the real existence of the assemblage the individual thinks is relevant to the perceived call is, at best, a secondary consideration.

Treating interpellation as a type of (de/re)territorialization that is grounded in subjective interpretation increases the importance of historical registers and habit to Deleuze's model: for Deleuze, the weight that is habitually placed on different historical registers by a particular subject influences which events produce the emergence of a constellation of larval subjects (that is, which events act as interpellations), while also shaping which responses the subject views as best or most appropriate given a particular interpellation. The benefit of describing the emergence of larval subjects as the result of (multiple) interpellations rather than as (de/re)territorializations is that it enables us to think about the ways that subjective emergence is the result of concurrent semiotic processes. For Deleuze, such semiotic processes must be grounded in continually reinterpreting the past, so that the emergence of a given assemblage of larval subjects is inseparable from its synthesis of time in acts of remembering:

time was *the structure* of the mind, now the subject is presented as *the synthesis* of time.

In order to understand the meaning of this transformation, we must note that the mind includes memory in Hume's sense of the term: we distinguish in the collection of perceptions, sense impressions, ideas of memory, and ideas of imagination, according to their degrees of vividness. Memory is the reappearance of an impression in the form of an idea that is still vivid. (*Empiricism* 94)

Though Deleuze takes pains to subordinate memory to habit, here, it is important to note just how many different cognitive phenomena Deleuze treats as "memory." Deleuze's model, like Hume's,<sup>26</sup> views the human mind as a confused mess of impression, memory, and imagination;

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<sup>26</sup> Deleuze is following Hume, who makes an important distinction between two kinds of perceptions: impressions and ideas (Hume 132-47). Roughly, impressions "arise from the senses" (Hume 132), and can be thought of as the mental activity that result directly from currently present stimulus, whereas "the idea of that existence" (Hume 132) is all that remains once the stimulus is no longer present. The "transition [from the impression] to the idea of the original connected cause or effect" (Hume 132) places all ideas on the same plane – whether they are simple ideas that result from a single impression, or complex ideas that are the result of multiple combined impressions. In addition, though the stimulus creating an impression can be internal (a reflection, which becomes an "idea of the

the complexity and indeterminacy of this model are an asset, however, as they provide a way to consider the difficulty faced by a subject who is affected by something but cannot be absolutely sure whether he or she is judging the present with reference to memories of true impressions, or according to the “counterfeit [...] effects on the belief and judgment” (Hume 134) that really originated in the imagination.

Memory of memory, memory of shared memory, memory of collective memory, and memory of history operate on the same semiotic plane as memory of things personally experienced, as all of these types of remembrance are transformed by each emergent assemblage of larval subjects, and as a consequence, one is not able to distinguish clearly between ideas that originated with impressions and those that originated with the imagination in any objectively reliable way; nevertheless, interpellation is grounded in one’s accounts of the past as the present is always interpreted with reference to the apparent past, just as the past is always reinterpreted with reference to the present. For Deleuze and Hume, the cause of an “idea” of something in a subject’s mind determines its “force and vivacity,” and the force and vitality of an idea are factors that shape which accounts one uses to assess the present (and how one interprets the present can shape individual behaviour in importantly different ways). There is slippage in both Hume and Deleuze between, on the one hand, “impression” and “senses,” and on the other hand, “memory” and “idea”; this is telling because they both treat memory as a broad cognitive category that includes many different thought processes and many different types of remembrance. Because one can also remember past instances of remembering, I would argue

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imagination”) or external (a sensation, which becomes an “idea of memory”), one is not always able to distinguish the two: “an idea of the memory [...] may degenerate to such a degree, as to be taken for an idea of the imagination; [...] an idea of the imagination may acquire such a force and vivacity, as to pass for an idea of the memory, and counterfeit its effects on the belief and judgment” (Hume 134). Thus, Deleuze follows Hume in distinguishing between different types of perception according to whether they are impressions, ideas produced by a memory of past impressions, or ideas produced by the imagination (that is, complex ideas, which are always combinations of other ideas, which always originated with impressions).

that Deleuze's treatment of "ideas of memory" should not include just a recollection of past impressions, but memory of past acts of recollection, so that "the reappearance of an impression in the form of an idea that is still vivid" should also be thought of as including several additional distinct types of memory: impressions of past acts of remembering; shared impressions of events themselves (shared memory); impressions about shared memory of shared impressions (shared remembrance); impressions of what one's experiences have suggested most people believe to have occurred, whether one has experienced the supposed events personally or not, whether or not one agrees with the accepted version of events, and whether or not such an account would stand up to close scrutiny (collective memory); impressions of past experiences of officially endorsed or evidence-based versions of events (history); and impressions of accounts one believes to be objectively accurate accounts of past events (capital H History). All of these accounts – which are all, in some sense, impressions of reflections (that is, impressions of ideas), and can be roughly divided into memory, shared memory, collective memory, and history – could be subsumed under the term "memory" as Deleuze uses it, for all function as signs that an emergent assemblage of larval subjects reformulates with reference to "the given" of the present in the service of predicting the future. In fact, it does not hold with Deleuze's model to discuss a memory (a recollection of a personal experience) as distinct to memory of memory/remembrance, or memory of other people's memories/remembrance, because there is no stable subject, and whatever assemblage of larval subjects processed events as "the given" of a particular moment is unlikely to ever re-emerge in exactly the same combination. At the same time, though, perceptions are distinguished according to "their degrees of vividness" because "ideas of the imagination [are] fainter and more obscure" (Hume 133). This is important to note because ideas thought to be the result of past impressions of sensations, even if these were not

experienced by the same assemblage of larval subjects (even if the subject is wrong in viewing them this way), may still be perceived as more vivid than ideas that could be termed collective memory or history – which still fall under the broad category of “memory” (as they are a memory of an idea), but were never simple “impressions” made discursive as they were translated to “ideas,” but were first received as “ideas.” While all forms of recollection involve reinterpreting the past with reference to an eternally new present, an emergent subject is still able to weigh the validity of some sources over others; if a person has a habit of treating certain acts of remembrance – for instance, those that are better thought of as collective memory or history – as more rooted in the collective imagination than those that have undergone the transformation from impression to idea, then that person is going to privilege memory and shared memory over collective memory and history.

### **Conclusions**

One of the primary aims of this dissertation is to treat assemblage theory as literary theory, and to rework the focus of assemblage theory as necessary to optimize assemblage theory as a tool for the study of modernist literature. This project’s focus on subjectivity draws on the fact that, as DeLanda points out, individual people may be, under certain circumstances, the valid historical actors that a study of social assemblage should examine. Most of the literature I will be writing about, however, focuses on the subject to an extent that would make Deleuze and Guattari uncomfortable, given that their critique of subject-centred philosophy leads them to focus on machinic processes of becoming over individual experiences. Whereas DeLanda is willing to concede the validity of the single human being as an assemblage, he views it as only theoretically the case and in rare instances that the person is the valid historical actor in question. His preference, too, is to focus on activities on other scales.

Central to assessing just how much attention an assemblage-based account should pay to activity on the scale of the subject is a question of whether individual experience is worthy of philosophical consideration. This question is not easy to answer in the context of contemporary assemblage theory. In his critique of Deleuze, *Organs Without Bodies*, Slavoj Žižek engages with this question by considering a 2002 New York University experiment in which a rat's brain was commandeered by researchers who inserted probes that enabled them to control the rat's movements. As Žižek asks,

How did the unfortunate rat “experience” its movement that was effectively decided from outside? Did it continue to “experience” it as something spontaneous (i.e., was it totally unaware that its movements are steered?) or was it aware that “something is wrong,” that another external power is deciding its movements? Even more crucial is to apply the same reasoning to an identical experiment performed with humans (which, ethical questions notwithstanding, shouldn't be much more complicated, technically speaking, than in the case of the rat).[...] So, again, will a steered human being continue to “experience” his movements as something spontaneous? (15)

The question of what it is that humans experience in the context of highly influenced – and in some cases, overdetermined – social structures is similarly central to my study of assemblage in modernist literature. The novels I address provide useful information about *both* the social groups' methods of influencing or determining the behaviour of individuals *and* the experience of individuals as they experience these pressures while attempting to navigate membership in multiple social assemblages. How individuals experience group membership is not the primary question for either Deleuze and Guattari or DeLanda, the former being more concerned with the machinic operations of bodies (preferably at scales other than the single human being), and the



latter only being theoretically interested in activities on this scale, on the rare instances the individual human person is determined to be the valid historical actor (a determination he only makes in abstract discussions, invariably focusing on different scales). While assemblage theory raises many questions about what it is like to be an individual experiencing the group dynamics theorists explain, actually describing the experiences of these individuals remains just beyond the scope of assemblage theory – and is thus crucial to my modification of that discourse.

It follows from Deleuze and Guattari's model that literature should not be ignored even in cases where the literary focus on the subject is at odds with Deleuze and Guattari's philosophical positions. An important benefit of literature, they argue, is that it can create new forms of being/becoming by fostering experiences that force individuals to modify their predominant worldviews. In addition, points of contact between literature and philosophy may even produce beneficial changes in an extant philosophical model, for Deleuze and Guattari's approach to philosophy as the creation of concepts relates to their view of philosophy as utterly project-directed: "All concepts are connected to problems without which they would have no meaning and which can themselves only be isolated or understood as to their solution emerges" (*What is Philosophy?* 16). As Deleuze explains in a dialogue with Michel Foucault, a philosophy is not a stable set of ideas that must always be used in the same way; rather, it is "exactly like a box of tools.[...] It must be useful. It must function.[...] A theory does not totalize; it is an instrument for multiplication and it also multiplies itself" ("Intellectuals" 208). Conceiving of philosophy as a toolbox of concepts opens up the possibility of using philosophy in numerous ways that are not in keeping with an originating philosopher's intentions. As Brian Massumi puts it, Deleuze "calls his kind of philosophy 'pragmatics' because its goal is the invention of concepts that do not add up to a system of belief [...], but instead pack a potential in the way a crowbar in a willing hand

envelops an energy of prying” (8). The goal of philosophy, for Deleuze, is never mere fealty to a given set of axioms, propositions, or dogmas; the goal is the creation of something new.

Similarly, the goal of this dissertation is to create something new: a mode of assemblage theory that is explicitly bound up with literary representations of subjectivity in the context of group activity.

This project attempts to respond to Žižek’s question about the experience of subjectivity by creating a dialogue between assemblage theory and the modernist novels of Woolf, Orwell, and Waugh. It does so by considering a variety of questions that emerge from just beyond the theoretical frameworks of Deleuze and Guattari, and DeLanda. First, by considering cases where the individual is *not* the valid historical actor but rather a component of a larger-scale assemblage, I examine how subjects are compelled to participate in the social activities that unfold on larger scales. The goal here is to focus on the operations of territorialization and interpellation to consider how an individual comes to act as a part of one group instead of another at any given moment. A result of treating interpellation as the form of territorialization that produces the movement of subjects within and between assemblages, while at the same time viewing interpellation as dependent on subjects’ perceptions of reality rather than on what actually exists (especially as a valid historical actor), means stepping away from DeLanda’s insistence that assemblage theory should only consist of a realist approach, since social groups that may not be valid historical actors (or may not even exist in a sense that DeLanda would consider to be “ontologically valid”) can still be perceived by subjects as interpellating them. Considering interpellation as dependent upon the subject’s *perception* of the hail raises questions about the role of modes of remembrance that shape how subjects interpret a given event. It also points to subjects’ abilities to discern between different registers of memory, and to recognize

that personal memory, shared memory, collective memory, and history need not agree with one another and may, moreover, seem simultaneously to require the individual to act in different ways. The focus on subjective experiences of territorialization and interpellation is further nuanced through Nietzsche's model of the Apollonian and the Dionysian insofar as it speaks to the existentialist longing to find or create meaning that underpins group membership and activities in the interwar and wartime prose fiction under study. The fact that the experiences of characters in early twentieth-century modernity are not necessarily bound only to activities within a specific assemblage raises questions about subjects' movements within and between assemblages. In addressing what lies immediately beyond the edges of assemblage theory and the relationships between individual and group in the novels of Woolf, Orwell, and Waugh, my aim is to explore the varied facets and levels informing the experiences of individuals as they attempt to navigate the complex macro-scale activities that form the backdrop of the inter-war moment.

## Section Two – Virginia Woolf

### Introduction

Virginia Woolf, George Orwell, and Evelyn Waugh all depict subjectivity operating at the intersection of group ontology (aligned with territorialization – questions relating to the nature of a group and its physical composition) and discourse (which, as I am concerned with it, is usually involved with coding, setting the parameters of membership in an assemblage). Woolf's novels most emphasize questions of group ontology as they depict subjectivity as multiple and multivalent, so that individual and group have a role in defining one another through their interactions. In addition, the interrelationship of multiple historical modes is central to Woolf's depiction of how individuals experience and navigate simultaneous membership in assemblages operating on numerous spatiotemporal scales. In Woolf's fiction, individuals are shown to draw on personal memory, shared memories, collective memory, and history to generate the accounts that shape their subjectivity by guiding them to act as part of a given assemblage.

As Jacob's perspective is largely absent from *Jacob's Room* (1922), he is almost exclusively defined by his roles in communities. Throughout the novel, Jacob's daily existence is shown to emerge in relation to his social network, his subjectivity shifting according to the identity of his interlocutors. Upon the outbreak of war, however, his various quotidian modes of subjectivity are obliterated by subjectivity to a macro-scale patriarchal and martial order. The novel's gestures towards diachronic group ontology underscore the extent to which any community is grounded in history and the fact that a great deal of what influences our lives takes place on a time scale too large for its relationship to the present to be apparent. That the novel presents the perspectives of those who knew Jacob draws attention to personal memories of him,

but it also gestures towards the communal nature of the personal losses suffered as a result of WWI and the emergent collective memory of the generation of young men who died.

The relationship between memory, subjectivity, and group ontology is also key to both narrative strands of *Mrs Dalloway* (1925). For Clarissa, the challenge is to reconcile her current subjectivity with that she remembers from her teenage friendships with Peter Walsh and Sally Seton. That this reconciliation is to take place at Clarissa's party emphasizes the extent to which reactivating her dormant modes of subjectivity involves bringing into contact two groups of which she is a subject. For Septimus, the challenge is to extricate himself from subjectivity to a group that no longer exists following the death of Evans in the war. Continued membership in this assemblage prevents him from integrating into a new community following his return to England with his wife, Rezia (Lucrezia). The discursive gap between Septimus and the other characters in the novel is shown to be one of society's key difficulties in helping soldiers returning from the war, and it suggests society needs sufficient discursive flexibility to mediate the soldiers' memories of the unprecedented horrors they experienced fighting in WWI.

*Between the Acts* (1941) foregrounds oppositional assemblages in the context of mindless habit, shared memories, collective memory, and history. Looking at the relationship of aged brother and sister Bart Oliver and Lucy Swithin allows a treatment of opposition as a form of inclusion in what would otherwise be a relationship completely determined by habit. At the same time, the unhappy marriage of Giles and Isa (Isabella) enables a consideration of oppositional subjectivity and its ability to generate new intermediary assemblages. Finally, that the approaching Second World War fosters national unity through European opposition allows for an examination of internal unity gained through external difference. As European war may mean the end of the local community and western civilization, the novel's consideration of this inevitable

conflict leads to an interrogation of the fundamental task of civilization as a refuge from the existential horrors that would otherwise reign. Thus, in *Between the Acts*, the threat of global conflict leads to an exploration of the fundamental basis of relationships and a study of the struggle to find the optimal balance of Apollonian and Dionysian elements in all relationships, from small-scale interpersonal relationships to the ongoing interactions between nations, and on various intermediary scales.

### **Elegiac Assemblage: Subjectivity and Group Ontology in *Jacob's Room***

No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main. If a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as well as if a manor of thy friend's or of thine own were: any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind, and therefore never send to know for whom the bells tolls; it tolls for thee. (John Donne, "Meditation 17" 103)

Noting that *Jacob's Room* depicts a young boy's upbringing and development into a promising young man only to die as a result of WWI's insatiable hunger for promising young men, many critics justifiably view this novel as a critique of subjectivity and the processes of subjectification that end in Jacob's pointless death. Edward Bishop, for instance, argues that Woolf is using Jacob's subjectification to explore "the construction, and representation of, the subject" (148). While he identifies the opening scene as an interpellation by quoting Louis Althusser's "Ideology," Bishop's reading focuses on subjects being interpellated by ideology rather than by particular groups (or the ideologies of those groups): "Jacob is 'recruited' by ideology, from that first shout by his brother, 'Ja—cob! Ja—cob!,' which recruits him for the family, to the point where he answers off-stage the pointing finger and 'I Want You!' of Lord Kitchener's famous recruiting poster" (147). Though he is called near the opening of the novel, Jacob is not actually around to recognize these calls, just as Kitchener's recruiting poster is also "off-stage" – or more precisely, not depicted in the novel. These hails function, at best, as failed attempts at interpellation. For a novel that is ostensibly about "the construction, and representation of, the subject," and which functions by showing Jacob "'recruited' by ideology," unambiguous interpellations of the kind Bishop is interested in are strikingly scarce.

This is not to say that subjectivity is not a primary focus of *Jacob's Room*; rather, Bishop's focus on a literal instance of an Althusserian hail and his treatment of ideology in an

abstract sense raise issues about the extent to which readings of interpellation should situate subject formation as determined by activities on a single scale. The temptation is to view the individual from a macro-level, at which point subjects are merely “puppets of ideology” and constrained by ideological state apparatuses: “the church for Mr Floyd, patriarchy for Betty Flanders [...]. You may, like Julia Hedge, choose the discourse of feminism, but you are interpellated nonetheless” (Bishop 152-3). Such an approach cannot distinguish between different modes of ideology and subjectivity because it implies that subjectivity is determined by ideology more broadly. And even if one accepts that subjectivity should be discussed exclusively as originating from a macroscopic scale, it does not necessarily follow that all forms of subjectivity are equal, for while an arsonist and astronaut are both “subjects of ideology,” these two modes of subjectivity do not produce similar experiences of subjectivity and are not comparably desirable.<sup>27</sup> As importantly, readings that come close to universalizing or normalizing Jacob’s situation by casting him as a subject that simply represents the quotidian process of subjectification risk missing the reason Jacob dies, and missing that his death takes place in a context that Woolf strenuously resists normalizing.

One consequence of too broadly defining subjectivity is that it takes for granted a macro-reductionist approach to *Jacob’s Room* at odds with the novel’s primary focus. When Bishop

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<sup>27</sup> Of course, Bishop is aware of the limitations of his theoretical model, and he recommends in a footnote that “a study of the different orders of ideology, not just different kinds, at play in *Jacob’s Room* would be extremely useful” (153). While I will not be able to do quite as much as Bishop would like in this chapter, I will sketch some of the modes of subjectivity on different spatiotemporal scales, with the hope that I will be able to argue for viewing Woolf’s interest in something like “subjectivity” as being ultimately inseparable from her concerns with group ontology. If one’s first premise is that subjects are interpellated by ideology, understood in the most abstract terms possible, then the result of any analysis is pre-determined – the interaction produces a subject who is always already a subject, and is subject to ideology, as everyone always already is. Because such readings focus on too large a scale, they have difficulty actually speaking to the experience of subjectivity or characterizing the particular groups that individuals/subjects are forced to navigate.



explains *the reason* Woolf has chosen to use *Jacob's Room* to criticize subjectivity, his focus suggests that Woolf's critique is focused squarely on the macroscopic:

*Jacob's Room* dramatizes how we exercise that reason within an envelope of ideology, how having been produced as subjects all that we [...] can do is reproduce the prevailing system, go on producing trade rivalries, tariffs, and war. Electing new leaders, changing political parties, creating a League of Nations will do little as long as the underlying ideology goes unrecognized[.] (169)

Be that as it may, in *Jacob's Room*, action is typically depicted in ways that emphasize small-scale assemblages. Though the novel's characters are significantly impacted by decisions made by larger-scale assemblages, this novel is not solely concerned with subjectivity formed on the macro-level. The fact that Woolf does not focus exclusively on large-scale assemblages and social abstractions throughout *Jacob's Room* need not be seen as an invitation for critics to do so.

Where *Jacob's Room* does characterize macro-scale social orders, it also sketches out intermediary social scales and suggests connections to society on multiple scales. What is more, as is the case in many of Woolf's novels, this social mapping has an important elegiac function: the glimpses of Jacob's extended social network provide literary representation of the effects of his death on a community that extends well beyond those who recognize their loss, in a manner that John Donne's "Meditation 17" describes so eloquently. Throughout *Jacob's Room*, one of Woolf's key concerns is the relationship between individuals and larger social groups, so that the loss of one is shown to be a loss to everyone. In this sense, *Jacob's Room* is a novel that attempts to show the real-world intricacies of the abstract social ramifications of loss. But to recognize the ripple effects of individual death, it is necessary to understand the questions of group ontology that are at the heart of the novel.

Whatever critical approach one uses to examine *Jacob's Room*, it is crucial to recognize the extent to which the novel resists privileging a single spatial or temporal scale. To this end, I will begin by examining depictions of synchronic group activity in *Jacob's Room*, in an attempt to expose the individual as a site of multiple, often contradictory, modes of subjectivity, each of which is related to activity on several scales. I will then consider group activity from an increasingly diachronic perspective, which reveals synchronic group activity as caught up in processes unfolding on multiple temporal scales. Ultimately, the model of subjectivity present in *Jacob's Room* cannot be separated from concerns with group ontology. The horror revealed by *Jacob's Room* is the extent to which war is able to flatten the complexity out of synchronic and diachronic assemblages, so that micro-scale subjectivities can be eliminated or made subservient to national martial interests. However, the tragedy of this situation is most evident if one recognizes the process of subjectification, as depicted in the novel, as a constant tug of war upon the subject's loyalties, which reach out to collectives on countless synchronic and diachronic scales.

### **Synchronic Subjectivity and Group Ontology**

Though subjectivity and interpellation are foregrounded in numerous scenes throughout *Jacob's Room*, these scenes render subjectivity in a way that highlights how it is activated within the context of a particular group. For instance, the relationship between subjectivity and group membership is evident in the dispute between Jacob and his mother over the sheep's skull he finds on the beach in the first chapter:

“There he is!” cried Mrs Flanders, coming round the rock and covering the whole space of the beach in a few seconds. “What has he got hold of? Put it down, Jacob! Drop it this moment! Something horrid, I know. Why didn't you stay with us? Naughty little boy!

Now put it down. Now come along both of you,” and she swept round, holding Archer by one hand and fumbling for Jacob’s arm with the other. But he ducked down and picked up the sheep’s jaw, which was loose. (6-7)

The conflict depicted here is initiated because Jacob has not respected his responsibilities in a particular assemblage. By wandering off, Jacob is ignoring an Althusserian hail and choosing a mode of subjectivity other than the one given to him by his family. In other words, while he is abandoning his family by running away, he is not abandoning all of the modes of subjectivity that are made available to him. For example, a ‘boys will be boys’ attitude that encourages male children to disobey female authority figures<sup>28</sup> is certainly a patriarchal one, and is likely active here.<sup>29</sup> Yet being ‘a good boy’ is also a valid subject position for a young boy, so we know he is enacting one of several forms of subjectivity that are open to him. Certainly, Jacob’s particular relationship with his mother is significant, and as Louise Poresky implies, this dispute is rooted in a feedback loop of circular causality: “The first contact [...] reveals Mrs Flanders’s intolerance for the things that mean the most to Jacob – exploration and discovery.[... Ultimately,] Betty experiences discomfort at Jacob’s defiance, which arises from his own discomfort caused by her intolerance” (80). It is also possible that Jacob is acting as part of an oppositional assemblage composed of himself and his mother, so that what she intends as a call to obey is interpreted by him as a call to disobey. Therefore, the same call can be seen as requiring different actions depending on the subject’s view of the active assemblage and his or her place in it.

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<sup>28</sup> Anne Brontë’s *Agnes Grey* (1847) provides an examination and searing indictment of such an attitude.

<sup>29</sup> For prolonged discussions of Jacob’s subjectivity that focus on Jacob as a patriarchal subject, see Tammy Clewell (e.g. 204-9) and Makiko Minow-Pinkney (e.g. 24-53).

Additionally, it is important to note that this scene also depicts interpellations for Mrs Flanders, as this demonstrates how subjectivity functions both within and across assemblages. Clearly, her role as mother comes with certain expectations that she is at least partially satisfying when she addresses a son who has wandered off. Furthermore, her inner monologue shows that her marginal position as a newcomer to the community and her marital status both relate to how she is acting: “No, but not in lodgings, thought Mrs Flanders. It’s a great experiment coming so far with young children. There’s no man to help with the perambulator. And Jacob is such a handful; so obstinate already” (7). Following these considerations, she changes her approach slightly, more pleading than demanding, “Throw it away, dear, do,’ [...] but Jacob squirm[s] away from her” (7). This new approach shows not only the pressure of what she perceives to be her family’s place in a larger community, but also the extent to which Jacob’s disobedience acts as a form of interpellative feedback, so that how he responds to her interpellation is an interpellation for her. We know that “The sheep’s jaw with the big yellow teeth in it lay at [Jacob’s] feet” (11) at the end of the chapter, so it follows that this conflict ends with a compromise: Jacob keeps the jaw he picks up instead of the whole skull. As they continue their walk home, however, the landscape, which seems somehow ominous to Mrs Flanders, hails her again, this time into a mode of protector: it “stirred Betty Flanders and made her think of responsibility and danger. She gripped Archer’s hand. On she plodded up the hill” (8). As her shifting perspectives and roles suggest, Mrs Flanders may always-already be a subject, but her expectations, responsibilities, and possible actions depend significantly on what groups and discourses she views as being most relevant at the moment.

Depictions of the Flanders family highlight the extent to which one’s position in particular groups shapes one’s subjectivity, and point to the fact that conflicting modes of

subjectivity can emerge from the differing expectations placed on members of different groups. This is evident when Mrs Flanders calls Archer and Jacob at the same time, in a scene that shows interpellation to be a function of one's perceived place in particular assemblages:

“That’s an orchid leaf, Johnny. Look at the little brown spots. Come, my dear. We must go home. Ar—cher! Ja—cob!”

“Ar—cher! Ja—cob!” Johnny piped after her, pivoting round on his heel, and strewing the grass and leaves in his hands as if he were sowing seed. Archer and Jacob jumped up from behind the mound where they had been crouching with the intention of springing upon their mother unexpectedly, and they all began to walk slowly home. (17)

While Jacob is obviously interpellated by here – as a matter of fact, this is the only instance in the novel where Jacob responds to a call that bears any similarity to Archer’s call at the beginning of the novel – he is simultaneously acting as a member of at least two groups: an assemblage with his brother, Archer, which they have here formed with the intention of frightening their mother; and an assemblage that is the family more generally. Obviously, there is overlap in the conditions and expectations of group members in these two assemblages, which only makes sense, since one is a sub-group of the other. Nonetheless, the expectations placed on Jacob vary depending on whether he is alone with his sibling, “crouching with the intention of springing upon their mother unexpectedly,” or in his mother’s presence as they all “walk slowly home.” The scene depicts, in essence, a smaller-scale assemblage conspiring against a member of their larger-scale assemblage, though its general good humour would seem to reinforce membership in both.

Yet, *Jacob’s Room* frequently interrogates the nature of acting as a member of an assemblage by highlighting how difficult it can be to know either the nature of the group one is a

part of, or how one might be expected to act in such a group. This is certainly true of Jacob's encounter with Mrs Norman on the train to Cambridge. Not knowing Jacob, Mrs Norman attempts to analyze him and assess how she should act – a difficult thing to do when one is ignorant of the only other occupant of a particular assemblage. She begins by assessing the possibility that he could be intending to treat her violently: "the scent-bottle and a novel from Mudie's were both handy [...]. She would throw the scent-bottle with her right hand, she decided, and tug the communication cord with her left" (28). She notes her own social position, reflecting on the fact that "She was fifty years of age, and had a son at college," but concludes that, despite her age, "it is a fact that men are dangerous" (28). As she continues to assess the situation, how she should be acting is also at the forefront of her thoughts, and so she simultaneously studies his appearance and assesses whether it would be suitable to "offer him her paper" (28). Only once she comes to a relatively firm opinion about Jacob can she become confident about how she herself should be behaving: "Taking note of socks (loose), of tie (shabby), she once more reached his face. She dwelt upon his mouth. The lips were shut. The eyes bent down, since he was reading. All was firm, yet youthful, indifferent, unconscious – as for knocking one down! No, no, no!" (28). An earlier version of "Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown," this passage enacts the notion that subjectivity is dependent on particular social contexts and group memberships. As only two people are present, Mrs Norman needs to be relatively certain about what the other person is like before she can be sure how she should be acting, and as the two are part of the highly coded English middle class, Jacob's appearance gives her several clues about his identity. Her semiological assessment of Jacob's clothing and face functions as an interpellation, letting her know how she should act by providing information about the social context until that context becomes the hail. Something about the shabbiness of his tie and the

looseness of his socks in combination with his lips and eyes informs her that he is “like her own boy”; and if he is not the knocking-down sort, she, as a consequence, will not have to become the scent-throwing sort.

Though the narrator here functions as a character focalizer, who seems to have full access to Mrs Norman’s thoughts – at least initially – but not Jacob’s (Wall 289-90), we receive enough information to be able to determine that Jacob, too, is performing a role that is expected of him in the particular context: “when the train drew into the station, Mr Flanders burst open the door, and put the lady’s dressing-case out for her, saying, or rather mumbling: ‘Let me’ very shyly; indeed he was rather clumsy about it” (29). Jacob’s shyness and clumsiness suggest that this may not be a mode of subjectivity he is very adept at performing. Nevertheless, he performs it. Rather than behaving as “a very naughty boy” (7) or “the only one of her sons who never obeyed her” (21), as he might with Mrs Flanders, he behaves as a young man alone with an unknown woman in her fifties in a railway compartment is expected to.

Given the similar depictions of Oxbridge in *Jacob’s Room*, *A Room of One’s Own*, and *Three Guineas*, it follows that such institutions of patriarchal privilege should be seen as significantly shaping Jacob’s subjectivity. Indeed, macro-reductionist approaches to subjectivity have the most potential in the context of Jacob’s time at Cambridge. Tammy Clewell suggests that Woolf “positions us to see Jacob [...] as an embodiment of patriarchal attitudes that led to a war many believe to have been fought without real purpose” (204) and that, in the end, “[d]espite his rebellious temperament, Jacob has reaped the benefits of his gender and class, acquiring status in a society he appears to disdain” (205). It is tempting, however, to oversimplify the relationship between Jacob’s education and his position in society. Clewell’s reading makes it difficult to account for Woolf’s reflections upon gender privilege in *A Room of One’s Own*: “I

thought how unpleasant it is to be locked out [of the university]; and I thought how it is worse perhaps to be locked in” (31). There are benefits but also liabilities that accompany Jacob’s gender and class, and those liabilities are part of Woolf’s critique of war. It is not merely that Jacob is complicit in a system that is pointless, but that this system is bad for everyone: while it may be the case that Jacob is the victim of “gender constructs that surreptitiously conspired to produce Jacob’s death” (Clewell 206), it is also true that he is killed by a system that, ultimately, does not require one’s complicity to end one’s life. In the end, Jacob’s subjectivity within a system he is largely introduced to at Cambridge obliterates his quotidian modes of subjectivity to such an extent that it matters little whether or not he approves of the larger social order.

Though Jacob’s time at Cambridge provides him with the discourses that would come to define his subjectivity, the reader is not given exhaustive access to these discourses. A clear example of an Althusserian Ideological State Apparatus, Cambridge does attempt to interpellate Jacob into being the sort of subject the state expects him to be by, as Charles Armstrong has noted, making him feel “like a privileged inheritor of the past” (18). Significantly, however, much of the discourse we actually witness from Jacob’s time at Cambridge consists of little more than decontextualized fragments such as “‘Somehow it seems to matter.’[...] ‘Hum.[...] Well, you seem to have studied the subject’” (45). As a consequence, the particular nature of the discursive component of Jacob’s Cambridge subjectification is unclear.

What can be determined about the influence of particular discourses encountered at Cambridge must be reached through symptomatic analysis and compiled piecemeal. For instance, the fact that Greek is one of the things that is described as “burn[ing] above Cambridge” in the evenings (38), the “Greek dictionary with the petals of poppies pressed to silk between the pages” (38) in Jacob’s library, Jacob and Durrant’s discussion of “[t]he Greeks [...



and] how when all's said and done, when one's rinsed one's mouth with every literature in the world [...] it's the flavour of Greek that remains" (77), Jacob's absurd declaration that he and Durrant are "Probably [...] the only people in the world who know what the Greeks meant" (77), and the blind assertion when Florinda sits on Jacob's knee that "[th]us did all good women in the days of the Greeks" (78) all suggest an enthusiastic if naive fetishization of "Greekness" and "an idealised version of Greek civilisation" (Armstrong 115). Additionally, Jacob's frenetic late night debates with a circle of pseudointellectual friends who muse about Julian the Apostate (44-5) suggest an enthusiasm for academic dialectics, which is furthered by the fact that he composes and attempts to publish slightly naughty essays that cite "Aristophanes and Shakespeare" but also use "several indecent words and some indecent phrases" (70). Finally, Jacob's time at Cambridge coincides with a number of shocking misogynistic statements such as, "No one would think of bringing a dog into church. For [...] a dog destroys the service completely. So do these women" (31).<sup>30</sup>

Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to focus too exclusively on discursive content: these discourses also shape Jacob's membership in groups, and it is this group membership that ultimately results in his demise. During Jacob's time at Cambridge, discourse is inseparable from group membership, so that Jacob's exposure to Greek leads to a proliferation of conversation about Greek with Timmy Durrant, and enables him to interpret his relationship with Florinda in terms of these conversations. At Cambridge, the novel frequently emphasizes this connection between discourse and group membership: "It's damnably difficult. But, after all, not so difficult if on the next staircase, in the large room, there are two, three, five young men all convinced of this – of brutality, that is, and the clear division between right and wrong" (43). The connection

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<sup>30</sup> Obviously, these are highly imbricated discourses, and even distinguishing between these categories is somewhat artificial.

between discourse and group membership implicit in this passage has not gone unnoticed by critics. For instance, Kathy Phillips suggests that “Jacob does indeed accept the lessons in complacency that his university grafts in him.[...] As Jacob learns simplistic solutions that put him in the privileged camp of ‘right,’ he reinforces his earlier churchly practice in excluding others” (133-4). Though she emphasizes “the lessons in complacency,” K. Phillips also notes that it is not merely the simplistic solutions, but being in the correct ‘camp’ that makes one ‘right.’ But in the end, the precise conversations that take place at Cambridge can be fragmentary, as it is not a precise set of opinions that is important – after all, it is important that, “to Sopwith a man could say anything” (*Jacob’s* 40). An apparent paradox emerges here, though, for K. Phillips is obviously correct when she argues that Jacob more or less “unquestioningly swallows the prevailing views of women” (134). Yet, this is easily solved if one considers the particular parameters of membership in the ‘camp of right’: because the free proliferation of discourse seems to be a principle parameter of group membership, it stands to reason that this group would be able to accommodate all sorts of contradictions; given the barring of women from this group, it also makes sense that its members would also have a tendency towards bias against women, who cannot, after all, be members of the ‘camp of right.’ Who, precisely, *is* a member of the ‘camp of right’? Jacob’s close friends? or educated members of Jacob’s generation? or Cambridge graduates? or anyone with a university education? or any member of a particular class? or anyone who holds a particular opinion? Sopwith’s conveniently vague conditions of valid censorship or exclusion – “a man could say anything, until perhaps he’d grown old, or gone under, gone deep, when the silver disks would tinkle hollow, and the inscription read a little too simple” (40) – do little to answer this question. In all likelihood, any or all of these criteria could be applied at a given moment to discern/define the relationships between any number of people,

operating on a variety of scales. All the same, though many of the specifics are obscured in the novel, Jacob does act as though he believes he is a member of something like a 'camp of right,' which is associated with macro-order martial/patriarchal discourses that have a role in ordering and evaluating the other classes of discourse, as well as his actions.

*Jacob's Room* has an ambivalent tone towards the short-term impact of Jacob's education, however. It is almost certainly the case that Jacob's Cambridge "grounds its students in arrogance, competitiveness, and exclusivity, [and] it prepares them for the power-mongering and belligerence of war, as Woolf will make explicit in *Three Guineas*" (K. Phillips 133). Nevertheless, Jacob is not among the members of his generation who emerged Quick Marching from Cambridge, waving a union jack and rattling a sabre in the general direction of Germany. Consider the depiction of mass at King's College Chapel, for instance, which is serious, solemn, and peopled by figures with a more than passing resemblance to some of the men whose pictures appear in *Three Guineas*, but is not taken entirely seriously by either the narrator or Jacob:

Look, as they pass into service, how airily the gowns blow out, as though nothing dense and corporeal were within. What sculptured faces, what certainty, authority controlled by piety, although great boots march under the gowns. In what orderly procession they advance. Thick wax candles stand upright; young men rise in white gowns; while the subservient eagle bears up for inspection the great white book. (30)

The "sculptured faces," "certainty," "authority controlled by piety," "orderl[iness of the] procession," phallic "[t]hick wax candles stand[ing] upright" which are visually echoed by the "young men ris[ing] in white gowns," and the "great boots march[ing] under the gowns" all highlight the liabilities of a system that is too Apollonian to grasp its horrific potential, and all call to mind the homosocial, patriarchal, and martial education system Woolf critiques in *A*

*Room of One's Own* and *Three Guineas*. But Jacob and Timmy Durrant also mock this system: Jacob “caught Timmy Durrant’s eye; looked very sternly at him; and then, very solemnly, winked” (31). The act of winking in this space undermines the ceremony’s solemnity, and the fact that he winks *solemnly* only adds an element of deadpan parody that further highlights Jacob’s recognition of the scene’s absurdity. Several critics have noted the comedic presentation of scenes from Jacob’s time at Cambridge, with Judy Little even going so far as to treat *Jacob’s Room* as “being, in some ways, a parody [... of] the *Bildungsroman*” (“Comedy” 229), and suggesting that the narrator “satirizes Jacob’s ‘socialization,’ which seems in his case – like a faulty vaccination – not to have ‘taken’” (*Woman Writer* 47). This is an important point, for the novel does not highlight Jacob’s complicity with the order that ultimately leads to his death to the extent that a depiction of Jacob bellowing the virtues of nation or martial glory might have. Rather, it shows how difficult it is to avoid being complicit with such a system, and it draws attention to the perniciousness of the solemnly martial/patriarchal parameters of group membership, which may simultaneously be silly enough to wink away but deadly enough to take one’s life.

Yet, it is only following Florinda’s betrayal that Jacob turns conclusively to the macro-scale assemblages that one might expect to have been fixed by the time of his convocation. However striking Jacob’s frequent misogyny, “there are [also] brief moments when he views women as his equals” (Neverow 1), even after his graduation. The most conspicuous of these occurs in the context of his relationship with Florinda: “to figure out a comradeship all spirited on her side, protective on his, yet equal on both, for women, thought Jacob, are just the same as men – innocence such as this is marvellous enough, and perhaps not so foolish after all” (*Jacob’s* 80). One possible reason that such thoughts are “perhaps not so foolish” is that equality of this

sort is partially possible even in the strikingly patriarchal social context depicted in the novel, albeit only on a small scale. In other words, at the scale of an assemblage sufficiently microscopic that it largely takes place in private, it may be possible to disregard some of the expectations that would exist for subjects when they are interpellated by macro-scale assemblages. But it is interesting to note Jacob's turn back to these macro-scale assemblages when he sees Florinda "turning up Greek Street upon another man's arm" (98). After returning home, he reacts to his sense of betrayal by

reading the *Globe*.[...] He judged life. These pinkish and greenish newspapers are thin sheets of gelatine pressed nightly over the brain and heart of the world. They take the impression of the whole. Jacob cast his eye over it.[...] When a child begins to read history one marvels, sorrowfully, to hear him spell out in his new voice the ancient words.[...] Jacob took the paper over to the fire. The Prime Minister proposed a measure for giving Home Rule to Ireland.[...] He was certainly thinking about Home Rule in Ireland – a very difficult matter. (101-2)

As K. Phillips points out, Jacob "gets over his shock [...] by turning, himself, to the solaces of Empire" (150). This passage begins Jacob's alienation from Greekness that is completed when he recognizes it as "the Greek myth" (*Jacob's* 145) upon visiting Greece. I would argue, then, that it is not at college, but rather in this passage that Jacob truly begins to become a subject to the larger-scale assemblages that lead to his death by assuming a readily available mode of masculinity. In the end, it is this decision to disregard the personal to immerse himself in the public and the political and to focus his attention on events transpiring on the largest scale possible that functions as the turning point that ultimately leads to Jacob's death. This passage shows something that is "miserable" because it depicts an interpellation into the sphere that leads

to his death, for he freely accepts<sup>31</sup> one of the modes of subjectivity offered to him by the state and by the broader patriarchal military system. It is one of the few scenes in the novel that place Jacob firmly within a precise historical moment: such specificity marks the progress of history as the narrative gets closer and closer to Jacob's death.

Following his discovery of Florinda's unfaithfulness, larger-scale assemblages can be seen to make increasingly exclusive claims on Jacob's subjectivity, as a process of subjectification unfolds that leads directly to his death. Such a process is evident in the depiction of the hunt, which foreshadows Jacob's end while suggesting his acceptance of a mode of subjectivity that renders other forms irrelevant:

A few moments before a horse jumps it slows, sidles, gathers itself together, goes up like a monster wave, and pitches down on the further side.[...] Then as if your own body ran into the horse's body and it was your own forelegs grown with his that sprang, rushing through the air you go, the ground resilient, bodies a mass of muscles, yet you have command too, upright stillness, eyes accurately judging. Then the curves cease, changing to downright hammer strokes, which jar; and you draw up with a jolt; sitting back a little, sparkling, tingling, glazed with ice over pounding arteries, gasping: "Ah! ho! Hah!" the steam going up from the horses as they jostle together at the cross-roads, where the signpost is, and the woman in the apron stands and stares at the doorway. The man raises himself from the cabbages to stare too. (105)

Louise Poresky connects the first half of this depiction to Jacob's sexual encounter with Florinda, arguing, "This unity of human being and animal depicts Jacob's newly acquired

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<sup>31</sup> I am borrowing from Althusser's often elided notion, here, that subjectivity is freely accepted by the subject (168 and 181-3).

reconciliation between his rational faculties and his passionate powers” and that, as a consequence, “a complementary combination of the intellect and the body takes place” (88).

It is true that horse and rider here function as a unified assemblage, with multiple beings acting as one. Nevertheless, this assemblage is not, finally, liberating; rather, Jacob is galloping toward his demise. The comparison of horse/rider to “a monster wave” emphasizes this assemblage’s destructive potential. The initial image of an abstract single horse and rider becomes, without warning, associated with several others in the image of “steam going up from the horses as they jostle together at the cross-roads, where the signpost is,” in a way that draws attention to Jacob’s place in a larger community. Further, the plurality of horses and riders is situated within a particular social context: “the woman in the apron stands and stares at the doorway. The man raises himself from the cabbages to stare too.” More than merely a symbolic unity of body and mind, this quotation also shows a small-scale assemblage becoming powerful as it enters a more influential class of individuals, peopled by figures such as the Countess of Rocksber and her “celebrities,” including Joseph Chamberlain, the famous imperialist politician (104-5).

Additionally, women and members of the working class can do little but stand by and watch as the riders form a larger-scale assemblage of a certain class and occupy themselves with the murder of foxes. While Jacob is part of this group, he does not seem adept at the type of pursuit underway: “So Jacob galloped over the fields of Essex, flopped in the mud, lost the hunt, and rode by himself eating sandwiches, looking over the hedges, noticing the colours as if new scraped, cursing his luck” (105). Woolf’s imagery, here, develops the relationship between individual and group, representing a commentary on the processes that increasingly exert their authority over individual subjectivity in concert with the national war-machine’s attempts to

activate individuals as members of collectives sufficiently large and obedient to do war with other nations. And like the Hunt, these processes do not end well for Jacob.

Despite the fact that Jacob is increasingly governed by large-scale assemblages, he prefers smaller-scale assemblages, if only because he is more in control of his own subjectivity in such contexts. This is suggested by the narrator's assessment of his reaction to the Plumers' luncheon:

Insolent he was and inexperienced, but sure enough the cities which the elderly of the race have built upon the skyline showed like brick suburbs, barracks, and places of discipline against a red and yellow flame.[...] Anyhow, whether undergraduate or shop boy, man or woman, it must come as a shock about the age of twenty – the world of the elderly – thrown up in such black outline upon what we are; upon the reality;[...] upon the obstinate irrepressible conviction which makes youth so intolerably disagreeable – “I am what I am, and intend to be it,” for which there will be no form in the world unless Jacob makes one for himself. (34)

Though Vara Neverow notes Jacob's dislike for “formal high-society events, which he finds excruciatingly boring” (xlvii), and suggests an unwillingness to participate in such events may be behind his failure to propose to Clara Durrant, such gatherings also place Jacob in a social setting sufficiently large and complex to prevent him making “form in the world [...] for himself” by adopting whatever mode of subjectivity he sees fit. As the size of an assemblage grows, the parameters of membership come to be decreasingly defined by any particular group member. Indeed, “the world of the elderly” is associated with “brick suburbs, barracks, and places of discipline” because these settings come with pre-determined expectations about the type of person Jacob should be and how he should act.



The reasons we are eventually given for Jacob's reluctance to propose to Clara suggest Jacob's awareness of these limitations: "Of all women, Jacob honoured her most. But to sit at a table with bread and butter, with dowagers in velvet, and never say more to Clara Durrant than Benson said to the parrot when old Miss Perry poured out tea, was an insufferable outrage upon the liberties and decencies of human nature – or words to that effect" (129). His attitude implies more than mere boredom, given the references to "liberties" and "decencies." Something about the social setting itself prevents relationships from developing along lines that seem sufficiently free, as though the dowagers in velvet represent an oppressive panoptic force. The determining factor here is Jacob's preference for a type and scale of assemblage that allows group members to have a direct role in defining the nature of the active group, and therefore, their own subjectivity.

The tragic message at the heart of *Jacob's Room* is that, though interpellations from large-scale assemblages can be mediated at a micro-scale, large-scale assemblages also have the power to limit the ability to shape one's own mode of subjectivity. In particular, during war, the large-scale assemblage that is the classed, patriarchally controlled nation has the ability to assert the modes of subjectivity that suit it best. This is suggested by Jacob's death, for though we are not explicitly shown Jacob's death and are not given Jacob's reasons for participating in the war, we are provided with a pair of scenes showing what death in war looks like:

The battleships ray out over the North Sea, keeping their stations accurately apart. At a given signal all the guns are trained on a target which (the master gunner counts the seconds, watch in hand – at the sixth he looks up) flames into splinters. With equal nonchalance a dozen young men in the prime of life descend with composed faces into the depths of the sea; and there impassively [...] suffocate uncomplainingly together.

Like blocks of tin soldiers the army covers the cornfield, moves up the hillside, stops, reels slightly this way and that, and falls flat, save that, through field glasses, it can be seen that one or two pieces still agitate up and down like fragments of broken matchstick. (164)

Nothing interpellates as effectively as enemy fire that hits its mark. Whatever identities the dozen young men have had, they are reduced to subjects of the enemy state by the actions of the gunner and cannot but accept this identity. The master gunner also lacks the freedom to choose from among multiple modes of subjectivity here, for the next most insistent form of interpellation is a threat to one's life, and the master gunner would certainly know that if he does not fire first, it may be he who dies in the water.<sup>32</sup> In short, warfare renders individuals into their most simplified but also most abstract condition, as subjects of the state, who must kill the enemy or be killed as the enemy. Perhaps this is the reason that the second perspective on these deaths within the paragraph is conveyed "through field glasses," at a distance and described in the passive voice – "it can be seen" – so that the human beings appear (albeit, to no particular named observer) as no more distinct than tin soldiers.

### **Diachronic Assemblage**

However necessary it is to map the roughly synchronic communities presented in *Jacob's Room*, the novel's project of remembrance is not confined to the synchronic, and its presentations of subjectivity and group ontology frequently gesture towards larger temporal scales as subject and community are placed in greater historical contexts. As Angeliki Spiropoulou points out, "*Jacob's Room* can be read as mapping in broad outline the highly

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<sup>32</sup> DeLanda's *War in the Age of Intelligent Machines* is largely concerned with the ways opposing nations can become locked in arms races in a similar way, but his discussion of war games (especially on 84-7), and a brief outline of the history of warfare in terms of arms races (110) are particularly focused on how opposed countries can become locked in feedback loops that end up coming close to determining the activities of both parties.

fragmentary and precarious experience of modern life and subjectivity” (74). But whereas Spiropoulou would focus on modern life and subjectivity as the products of “the antinomical phantasy of modernity on the one hand as a mere continuation and heir of the classical ideal and on the other as a more advanced historical stage” (74), I would argue that the novel depicts subjectivity on a variety of temporal scales, and not solely as a paradoxical relationship between the classical and the modern. Though *Jacob’s Room* often depicts subjectivity on the smallest temporal scale of the more or less synchronic, it also takes pains to place these scenes within larger temporal contexts, so that it is equally necessary to consider the novel’s engagement with questions of diachronic group ontology. Jacob’s is not only the life of a single entity simultaneously pulled between membership within multiple collectives, but is also the life of one who perceives himself as existing within a particular historical context, and who is interacting with larger-scale entities that are caught up in events unfolding on a temporal scale far different from either quotidian life or even the full life of any individual. It should also be noted that many of Jacob’s actions accrete meaning on a diachronic scale – so that, for instance, he fights to retain his jaw bone within a precise context, but this event takes on additional meaning as Jacob’s life continues to its eventual conclusion.

This line of inquiry presents a difficulty, though, for to discuss the diachronic assemblages present in *Jacob’s Room* requires first addressing the novel’s overall project of remembrance, and this is best done by considering the relationship between memory and collective memory in the novel. However, “the novel [...] unfolds in the very form of an absence.[...] In elegizing Jacob as an irrecoverable absence from the start, Woolf refuses to allow even the narrative of his life to compensate for his loss” (Clewell 199-200). Tellingly, Walter Benjamin’s description of Proust’s *mémoire involontaire* as “much closer to forgetting

than what is usually called memory” (202) could be applied equally well to *Jacob’s Room*.

Though the novel provides descriptions of past events that have been shared by Jacob and various other characters, it does not provide the characters’ memory of these events; rather, their description is mediated through a narrator that frequently distances herself from the events.<sup>33</sup>

Given the complexity of the narrative situation present in *Jacob’s Room*, it is clear that the novel provides not memories, but events that those who mourn Jacob are likely to remember. Not surprisingly, the overall text that consists of the assemblage of these descriptions cannot be considered a transcription of shared or collective memory: because it does not provide, for instance, the personal memories of a sufficiently large number of individuals, one cannot access the essentially imaginary realm of the partially-shared but frequently unarticulated memories that could allow the mourners to at least partially understand one another’s losses in a way that shared or collective memory might – though it may hint at what a collective memory of this sort may look like. Nonetheless, *Jacob’s Room* does, itself, form an attempt to participate in a project of collective memory. It is in this context that it is important to consider the extent to which Jacob functions as a type, for surely “[t]he lament for a sole individual is thus transformed, through the noncharacterization of Woolf’s protagonist, into a modern elegy which speaks for a generation of young men” (Oxner 211). To put it differently, as a representative of a particular class that suffered enormous losses in the First World War, Jacob is used by the novel to attempt to enter into the collective memory of society via the reading public. This is the mode of collective memory present in *Jacob’s Room*, and it is strengthened by the void Jacob leaves in the text, for as Clewell argues, this absence draws attention to the loss that has been suffered.

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<sup>33</sup> For detailed discussions of the narrator’s shifting role and the techniques used to achieve it, see Caramagno 195-7, and Wall 289-93.

Despite the difficulties presented by the fact that part of the novel's project of remembrance involves foregrounding forgetting, *Jacob's Room* nonetheless contains a conspicuous critique of history. Spiropoulou notes that "'History' as a term combines the ontological with the epistemological inasmuch as it refers both to the past and our representations of the past" (37). I would argue that Woolf's novel considers "history" in both senses, as it directly engages with things that have happened as well as with a consideration of how we represent those events. An example is the perspective on history revealed in the narrator's comments as Jacob and Timmy Durrant approach the Scilly Isles:

Yes, the chimneys and the coast-guard stations and the little bays with the waves breaking unseen by any one make one remember the overpowering sorrow. And what can this sorrow be?

It is brewed by the earth itself. It comes from the houses on the coast. We start transparent, and then the cloud thickens. All history backs our pane of glass. To escape is vain.

But whether this is the right interpretation of Jacob's gloom as he sat naked, in the sun, looking at Land's End, it is impossible to say; for he never spoke a word. (48)

Bishop suggests that the phrases "All history backs our pane of glass. To escape is vain" simply represent "an unproblematic view of history" (167), without elaborating on what this view might entail. But I would argue that this is one of the most amphibolous passages in the novel, and that it points to a complex version of history. For one thing, the vehicle of the central metaphor is uncertain: is it a window looking out at an approaching storm? "[B]acks" may also imply a picture frame, which would suggest that history forms the backing that holds the image in place.

Either way, which side of the glass are we on? Are we the image or the observer? Or are we on both sides simultaneously? What could it mean that “We start transparent, and then the cloud thickens”? Is it the “we” that forms the thickening cloud, as an image of assembly? If so, does this imply something about group formation or the assemblage of history? Further, it seems as though subject/object positions break down here, so that we are at once observer, cloud, and possibly even the glass that separates the two. Are we the source and substance of the cloud that it troubles us to gaze upon? And does “history” here refer to the ontological (the past, itself) or to the epistemological entity (our representations of the past)? Clearly, this passage is anything but a straightforward piece of historiography.

The narrator’s insistence that “the waves breaking unseen by any one make one remember the overpowering sorrow” could, of course, imply both definitions of “history.” On the one hand, the ontological form of history may be the culprit here, because the waves may cause one to remember sorrow by drawing attention to the transitory and ultimately anonymous nature of life. In this sense, “waves” also calls to mind the waves of troops that attempted to cross No Man’s Land in the Great War only to crash upon enemy machine-gun fire. On the other, it may be that the waves break “unseen by any one” and thus no one is to blame, as this suggests that histories, in the epistemological sense, fail to characterize or to address the sheer number of deaths adequately. In this context, it makes sense that the passage is followed by free indirect discourse within which Timmy and/or the narrator think(s), “There are things that can’t be said” (49). This is a contemplation of the failures of historical discourses that leads to a consideration of the difficulties communicating the inexpressible. Furthermore, because the ways in which we understand the past inform what possibilities seem reasonable at any given moment, it is possible that both sorts of “history” may be to blame for the sorrow described here. The fact

that the waves “make anyone remember” also seems to imply both a shared identity and a shared memory – at least insofar as the initially abstract “one” gives way to a “we” who is equally implicated in the scene. Perhaps this is an allusion to something the narrator believes to be present in the collective memory, and which does not need to be stated explicitly, just as it takes nothing more than a fleeting glance from a close friend to let one know how little the friend is enjoying a play. The references to “we” in this passage may suggest a group that remembers ontological history whether or not epistemological history is able to express these memories.

Though the examination of diachronic assemblages in *Jacob’s Room* leads directly to issues of personal and collective remembrance, it also shows the novel’s historical project becoming increasingly ambivalent as the Dionysian commitment to chaos, meaninglessness, and complete honesty, increasingly come up against the Apollonian impulse to order and create discrete meaning. It is for this reason that it is also important to note that the above passage begins by asserting an “overpowering sorrow” and is followed by a contemplation of “things that can’t be said,” for the contemplation of the past and history leads, here and throughout *Jacob’s Room*, to a consideration of Dionysian truths.<sup>34</sup> It is significant that a contemplation that includes troubling truths about our ability to represent the past furnishes a “we,” for the fact that these horrors are shared generates a form of Dionysian unity, which enables deep connections with

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<sup>34</sup> Historians and philosophers have noted such an inability of the soldiers returning from WWI to find the words that could communicate their experiences adequately. Paul Fussell, for example, notes, “even if those at home had wanted to know the realities of the war, they couldn’t have without experiencing them: its conditions were too novel, its industrialized ghastliness too unprecedented. The war would have been simply unbelievable” (87). Walter Benjamin makes a similar point:

Was it not noticeable at the end of the war that men returned from the battlefield grown silent – not richer but poorer in communicable experience?[...] For never has experience been contradicted more thoroughly than strategic experience by tactical warfare, economic experience by inflation, bodily experience by mechanical warfare, moral experience by those in power. A generation that had gone to school on a horse-drawn streetcar now stood under the open sky in a countryside in which nothing remained unchanged but the clouds, and beneath these clouds, in a field of force of destructive torrents and explosions, was the tiny, fragile human body. (“The Storyteller” 84)

one's fellow sufferers. Yet, it is also true that these Dionysian truths are being represented in an Apollonian form – an artistic work, a novel, mediated by a fictional character – and are immediately followed by an assertion of the value of the Apollonian: “There are things that can’t be said. Let’s shake it off. Let’s dry ourselves, and take up the first thing that comes handy.... Timmy Durant’s notebook of Scientific observations” (49). Here, the narrator’s bracing perspective merges indistinguishably with Timmy Durant’s thoughts within the action of the narrative: Timmy and Jacob are shaking off water and drying themselves and discussing whatever book they happen first upon. In short, this passage is an ambiguous hybrid of the narrator’s advice that we should resort to use of the Apollonian, despite its limitations, and of the characters doing so within the plot of the novel. It utilizes a common origin of a “we” to outline the ontological reality of a community that can be used to survive horrific Dionysian truths. Part of Clewell’s argument that “[t]he shock of [Jacob’s] absence [...] must be experienced without tempering or cure” (200) fits nicely in this context, for the Dionysian shock of absence is most accurately and intensely experienced when the urge to render meaningful is resisted. Additionally, it is also true that a community shares experiences of horrible absences, and that such shared experiences have the ability to unite with a profundity not otherwise possible.

Though shared access to Dionysian truths may provide a way to generate deep connections, the fact that these connections are rooted in a shared recognition of the sheer meaninglessness of existence cannot fully mediate the horrors. An Apollonian structure must appear as these horrors must be mediated but left intact as both Apollonian and Dionysian are necessary to create a meaningful community of mourners. Obviously, managing these two contradictory demands is nearly impossible, and something invariably goes wrong – this is the reason for the ambivalence of *Jacob’s Room* towards any act of remembrance, and the frequent



attempts to foreground the novel's artificial narrative status; nevertheless, the attempt to unify, however artificially, must be made; the alternative is more isolation and pointless death.

The contemplation of the diachronic communities in *Jacob's Room* often appears as a similarly odd mixture of collective memory and history that attempts to assert both Apollonian and Dionysian impulses. This is certainly the case with the meditation that follows a description of a band playing a waltz in a "Moorish kiosk": "The pale girls, the old widow lady, the three Jews lodging in the same boarding-house, the dandy, the major, the horse-dealer, and the gentleman of independent means, all wore the same blurred, drugged expression, and through the chinks in the planks at their feet they could see the green summer waves, peacefully, amiably, swaying round the iron pillars of the pier" (16). Though there are numerous differences between members of the crowd gathered here, the repeated use of definite articles suggests that they are at once members of a particular community and also subject positions that would be standard in English communities. It is noteworthy that the scene begins with a waltz, for what better represents the unapologetically Apollonian element of civilized society? The attendees are, nonetheless, able to see through the gaps in the boardwalk to the water below. This is a metaphor for the structures that make contemporary civilization possible by displacing humanity from nature, while making it clear that such a displacement does not involve severing the bonds between civilization and nature. The discussion of the synchronic crowd then leads to a diachronic meditation that plays with the relationship between Apollonian and Dionysian, on the one hand, and collective memory and history, on the other, as it moves backwards in time:

But there was a time when none of this had any existence (thought the young man leaning against the railings). Fix your eyes upon the lady's skirt; the grey one will do – above the pink silk stockings. It changes; drapes her ankles – the nineties; then it amplifies – the

seventies; now it's burnished red and stretched above a crinoline – the sixties; a tiny black foot wearing a white cotton stocking peeps out. Still sitting there? Yes – she's still on the pier. The silk now is sprigged with roses, but somehow one no longer sees so clearly. There's no pier beneath us. The heavy chariot may swing along the turnpike road, but there's no pier for it to stop at, and how grey and turbulent the sea is in the seventeenth century! Let's to the museum. Cannon-balls; arrow-heads; Roman glass and a forceps green with verdigris. The Rev. Jaspar Floyd dug them up at his own expense early in the forties in the Roman camp on Dods Hill – see the little ticket with the faded writing on it. (16)

This is a passage that illustrates the extent to which “the novel abounds with images of order and chaos” (Caramagno 187). With the slippage between the thoughts of the man leaning on the railings and those of the narrator comes an ambiguous mixture of collective memory (impressionistic details) and history (precisely placed and categorized details), exposing the present moment as fleeting and more or less provisional, and suggesting the contingency of civilization itself. When this meditation ultimately turns into a troubling observation of “how grey and turbulent the sea is in the seventeenth century!,” the anxiety is mediated by an effort to replace anarchy with an order that is marked with the call, “Let's to the museum,” and punctuated more sedately with a period rather than the exclamation point that punctuates “the seventeenth century!” Even “the little ticket with the faded writing on it” provides a precise identity to items that were once mere unordered fragments of past times and lives. Tellingly, the scene ends with “Mrs Flanders s[itting] on the raised circle of the Roman camp,” doing the sort of thankless quotidian labour that makes society possible – in this case, “patching Jacob's breeches” (16). This passage exposes an ambivalent attitude towards the relationship between

past and present, history and collective memory, and more generally, Apollonian and Dionysian. The only certainty in all of this is the implied necessity for community.

Scenes that move from a particular community to trans-historical depictions of this sort are important because they show synchronic snapshots of communities but also gesture towards these communities existing in a larger diachronic context, on a timescale that well exceeds a human lifespan.<sup>35</sup> Further, the glimpses of Dionysian reality that appear in these oddly trans-historic mixtures of collective memory and history hint at something like Dionysian unity – at least insofar as such passages provide a deep foundation for the sense of unity one can feel with others. In *Jacob's Room*, moments such as these offer the best chance at meaningful membership in a group, as they offer a sense of unity that defies expression. This is not to say that the speakers in such passages do not try to put such unity into words. But there is a recognition that the Apollonian process of ordering, quantifying, and presenting experiences that resist precise cataloguing necessarily corrupts them by forcing the apparent irrationality of the experiences into a rationally expressible unit. The speakers try to present them, seeming to realize the impossibility of doing so, but also the necessity of trying anyway in efforts Nietzsche might characterize as depictions of Dionysian heroism.

Perhaps the clearest example of this mixing of history and collective memory, Apollonian and Dionysian, as well as synchronic and diachronic assemblages, takes place in the scene of

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<sup>35</sup> This is roughly in line with Gillian Beer's discussion of prehistory – though Beer primarily limits her analysis to *The Voyage Out*, *To the Lighthouse*, *The Waves*, and *Between the Acts*:

What I want to argue is that the need to discover origins, the vehement backward plumbing of history, the insistence on causality and judgment, was *allayed* for Virginia Woolf by her awareness of the survival of prehistory. The continued presence of sea, clouds, leaves, stones, the animal form of man, the unchanged perceptual intensity of the senses, all sustain her awareness of the simultaneity of the prehistoric in our present moment. This absolves her from the causal forms she associates with nineteenth-century narratives. (171)

By suggesting, "prehistory implies a pre-narrative domain which will not buckle to plot.[...] It is time without narrative, its only story a conclusion. That story is extinction" (162), Beer even draws attention to something very much like what I am characterizing as the tension between the Apollonian and the Dionysian in *Jacob's Room*.

Betty Flanders and Mrs Jarvis on the moors near a churchyard at midnight. Though tombstones “saying, ‘I am Bertha Ruck,’ ‘I am Tom Gage’” (139) seem to give voices to the numerous dead, these voices are only able to recite the names of the interred. The dead are mediated by Apollonian New Testament passages, which say “something for them, very proud, very emphatic, or consoling” (139). The dead are not just collected within the churchyard, or comparably characterized by similar passages from the same religious text; they are also part of the same landscape, as the moors “accept” the entire scene (140). This unites living and dead in such a way that Mrs Flanders loses her name and becomes a subject position, for “if all the ghosts flocked thick and rubbed shoulders with Mrs Flanders in the circle, would she not have seemed perfectly in her place, a live English matron, growing stout?” (139). Since past and present identity merge throughout this scene, Apollonian efforts struggle to order reality while existential Dionysian indifference continually reasserts itself:

The clock struck the quarter.

The frail waves of sound broke among the stiff gorse and the hawthorn twigs as the church clock divided time into quarters.

Motionless and broad-backed the moors received the statement “It is fifteen minutes past the hour,” but made no answer, unless a bramble stirred.[...]

Now a fox steals out from behind the gorse bushes. (139-40)

As Neverow points out, though the novel is focused on the human world, “there are other living things [...] such as butterflies, birds, dogs, and even plants that have no interest in human existence at all and are concentrating on their own existences” (xxxix), and here, an unconcerned fox and some hawthorn twigs are the closest nature comes to engaging with the landscape’s human occupants (xl). Yet the striking of the clock is repeated throughout this passage, as it is in

Clarissa Dalloway's London, showing human attempts to impose order onto the uncaring natural world, and giving voice to the "the dead and the living, the ploughmen, the carpenters, the fox-hunting gentlemen and the farmers smelling of mud and brandy [... whose] tongues join together in syllabbling the sharp-cut words, which for ever slice asunder time and the broad-backed moors" (140). Here, nature and time are whole, and are only divided by the efforts of humanity to structure chaos. Significantly, language is not naturalized here, so that words are treated as much the products of human labour as the "worn and greasy [pews], and the cassocks in place, and the hymn-books on the ledges" (140).

This struggle between Apollonian and Dionysian, church and landscape, is understood to be a constant feature of the spiritual community that has occupied this church for hundreds of years: "Plaint and belief and elegy, despair and triumph, but for the most part good sense and jolly indifference, go trampling out of the windows any time these five hundred years" (140). The church is thus identified as the site of a diachronic assemblage composed of those who have been attending its services for at least five centuries. This is an assemblage that unites in the form of a refuge from the natural world and that produces sounds that ring out over the landscape – an ultimately uncaring landscape that contains the departed members of the community, and will eventually contain each of the living members.

The community that occupies this landscape is rooted in both Apollonian and Dionysian, as each of the two forces isolates and unites. For this reason, it makes sense that the scene does not conclude by resolving this ambivalence:

"... and," said Mrs Flanders, straightening her back, "I never cared for Mr Parker."

"Neither did I," said Mrs Jarvis. They began to walk home.

But their voices floated for a little above the camp. The moonlight destroyed nothing. The moor accepted everything. Tom Gage cries aloud so long as his tombstone endures. The Roman skeletons are in safe keeping. Betty Flanders's darning needles are safe too and her garnet brooch.[...] But at midnight when no one speaks or gallops, and the thorn tree is perfectly still, it would be foolish to vex the moor with questions – what? and why?

The church clock, however, strikes twelve. (140-1)

The presence of Roman skeletons points to membership in an even older and broader assemblage – a shared identity based on moving the spatiotemporal scale beyond the relatively recent and local into the ancient, national, and international, right back to the founding of Britannia. This geographically circumscribed assemblage is united by membership in a community that outlives any of its individual members, or even the societies they belong to, and occupies the same landscape, in life and in death, so that Mrs Flanders' needles and brooch remain a part of it whether she drops them or not. Be that as it may, the human practice of artificially dividing in order to unite is not restricted to time and the landscape, as is shown by the fact that Mrs Flanders and Mrs Jarvis are here united in their dislike of another member of their synchronic community, Mr Parker. This shows how deeply human enterprises are rooted in “join[ing] together in syllabing the sharp-cut words” that allow humans to pull order out of chaos, though occasionally at the expense of others. Ultimately, it would be madness to expect this landscape to answer questions such as “what? and why?,” for such questions strictly belong to the human sphere, which must deceive itself but not to the extent of thinking it can finally impose meaning onto life. That the chapter ends with the clock striking twelve points to the fact that recognizing the meaninglessness of nature cannot prevent humans from ordering it; this is important to note,

for a community that does not recognize nature's apathy is too deluded to survive, while a community that does not unite against this apathy is hardly a community.

### Conclusions

It is difficult to discuss subjectivity in *Jacob's Room* with a conventional understanding of Althusserian interpellation, for the simple fact we are not granted access to Jacob's thoughts and are, consequently, not able to access his concerns or motivations – it is for this reason that an analysis of subjectivity that takes into account individual experience of interpellation will have to wait for the first-person stream of consciousness narration of *Mrs Dalloway*. The lack created by our not having access to Jacob's thoughts should be evident from the sheer number of critics who discuss Jacob as some form of void. Makiko Minow-Pinkney, for example, argues that “Jacob is the lacuna in the consciousness of the text, an absent centre, a fissure in the novel round which the other characters gravitate” (28), suggesting Jacob forms an absence in both the text and the groups depicted. Kathleen Wall relates this to the novel's elegiac function when she notes that “Woolf emphasizes what we do not know about our ostensible hero, Jacob, and foregrounds the elegiac fractures and silences in the text” (Wall 287). Alex Oxner points to one important way the text produces such holes when he insists that “Woolf consciously removes Jacob's internal monologue [... so completely that] Jacob remains a spectral, unknown figure, despite his elevated status as the novel's protagonist” (212). Yet, Jacob's absence and the withholding of his internal monologue make it difficult to characterize Jacob's interpellations in terms that are unmistakably compatible with Althusser's depiction of a police officer calling a *name* and a *subject* turning. Because we are not given access to Jacob's mind, it is not clear how Jacob interprets the hails present in the novel, and a single stimulus could be interpreted as several types of hails, depending on which group one interprets oneself a subject of at a given moment –

choosing to ignore the police officer's hail does not make one any less of a subject, but merely a different sort of subject. As a consequence, the hails that take place in the novel do not make such an unambiguous demand and are not often responded to in such a predetermined way as in Althusser's classic formulation. Because conventional approaches to subjectivity and interpellation in *Jacob's Room* frequently restrict themselves to two particular scales – in the case of Edward Bishop, the subject and ideology, the latter of which, as the discursive embodiment of the ideas of the ruling class, stands in for hegemonic society itself – it is difficult to discuss the precise and nuanced depictions of subjectivity that appear in the novel unless we recognize subjectivity as something that involves influences from assemblages on several scales. The fact that questions of subjectivity in the novel come so insistently back to Jacob's position in and absence from particular groups suggests that *Jacob's Room* frames group ontology in relation to subjectivity.

Questions of group ontology are every bit as complex as questions of subjectivity, however, for the relationship between individual and community is problematized by the complexity around what it means to be a “group” – or, for that matter, an “assemblage.” As most of the events presented in *Jacob's Room* unfold on a relatively short time-scale, I have argued that it makes sense to consider groups first synchronically. To put it differently, because subjects are enacting their subjectivity according to how they perceive the group they are acting as a member of at a given moment, I have attempted to consider group ontology synchronically, though doing so may be little more than an arbitrary philosophical decision to extract a cross-section of a highly unstable and amorphous entity. While the result of such a move is unlikely to provide an accurate representation of group ontology, it is my hope that it gives insight into how



an individual views his or her relationships to social assemblages at the moment of interpellation or action.

As the synchronic element of group ontology does not, by any means, give a full picture of the true bind subjects face as they attempt to navigate their subjectivities, I have also attempted to examine the diachronic aspect of group ontology as it is presented in *Jacob's Room*. On the one hand, this allows one to step back and view synchronic assemblages and subjectivities to view them as part of ongoing processes. On the other, a focus on diachronic group ontology also leads directly to the novel's larger project of remembrance, and finally to a profound unsettling of memory, collective memory, and history, as these elements are pulled back and forth between a Dionysian compulsion to uncover the chaos and meaningless of existence and the Apollonian drive to order and to provide meaning.

The synchronic and the diachronic both provide Apollonian refuge while meaningfully grounding individual subjectivity in the Dionysian that makes assemblage necessary in the first place; by flattening the complexity out of synchronic and diachronic assemblages – and, consequently, out of subjectivity, as subjectivity in an assemblage is defined by the exteriority of relations, and no other relations are possible in this case – the state reduces complex and multivalent subjects into the national subjects required to wage war. The state at war thus produces subjects it can justify sending to their deaths because it defines their subjectivity solely with reference to itself and activities on its own scale. In this way, the state at war promotes a macro-reductionist model of subjectivity rooted in an Apollonian system that insists on the need to kill and die on behalf of martial abstractions, while *Jacob's Room* presents what is lost by thus simplifying subjectivity. That this martial Apollonian order also ill prepares those who survive to

return to more complex modes of synchronic and diachronic subjectivity following the war leads us to *Mrs Dalloway*.

### Discourse, Assemblage, and Epiphany in *Mrs Dalloway*

In the differend, something “asks” to be put into phrases, and suffers from the wrong of not being able to be put into phrases right away. This is when the human beings who thought they could use language as an instrument of communication learn through the feeling of pain which accompanies silence (and of pleasure which accompanies the invention of a new idiom), that they are summoned by language, not to augment to their profit the quantity of information communicable through existing idioms, but to recognize that what remains to be phrased exceeds what they can presently phrase, and that they must be allowed to institute idioms which do not yet exist. (Jean-François Lyotard, *The Differend* 13)

It is often suggested that *Mrs Dalloway* (1925) poses a critique of Clarissa Dalloway’s social system. To make this point, critics frequently cite Woolf’s diary entry of June 19, 1923, in which she expresses a desire to use the novel she was then referring to as *The Hours* “to criticise the social system, and to show it at work, at its most intense” (*A Writer’s Diary* 57). Nonetheless, there is little critical consensus on what, precisely, Woolf means here. For instance, though Alex Zwerdling recognizes that “Woolf’s picture of Clarissa Dalloway’s world is sharply critical,” he argues that the novel “cannot be called an indictment, because it deliberately looks at its object from the inside” (120). Kathy Phillips, however, insists that Woolf’s satire “demolishes Clarissa along with the rest of her world, so that she remains representative of her set, not in contrast to it. She fails to break with convention [...] as an almost inevitable product of society, which remains Woolf’s real target” (3). Part of what is at stake here, then, is how one defines “social system” and on what scale one sees the social system as operating. While K. Phillips uses “social system” interchangeably with “nation,” “state,” or perhaps even “imperial order,” Zwerdling’s preference for simply scare quoting “social system”<sup>36</sup> makes it possible for him to sidestep such a

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<sup>36</sup> For instance, referring to the ruling class preference for social amnesia, Zwerdling argues that “it is only by ignoring the more devastating facts and deep scars of recent history that the ‘social system’ has managed to keep functioning” (124). Though “social system” is here broadly synonymous with “nation” or “state,” it does permit him to shift scales, so that he is able to argue, for instance, that “[t]he fundamental conflict in *Mrs Dalloway* is between

conflation. This chapter will treat the social system being criticized in *Mrs Dalloway* as something that has more in common with Zwerdling's usage than with K. Phillips's – though even Zwerdling tends to focus on the majority of his attention on the national scale. As *Mrs Dalloway* highlights the experiences of individuals caught in the activities of assemblages operating on multiple scales, this chapter will focus on the multivalent social realities operating on individuals as they interact with others and navigate group membership.

But just as “social system” can refer to different aspects of social reality, “criticise” can be used in significantly different ways: an act of literary criticism is more likely to involve close analysis than absolute condemnation, and Woolf's criticism of the social system may not be altogether different from her stated desire “to show it at work.” On the other hand, it may not matter how much weight Woolf's intended to place on the word “criticize” when considering *The Hours* on June 19, 1923, for in the novel that was published as *Mrs Dalloway* nearly two years later on May 15, 1925, the criticism she actually poses is largely ambivalent. Despite the fact that scenes in the novel frequently suggest either condemnation of or sympathy for (sometimes neither and frequently both) the biases shown by its characters, any issues related to the novel's final valuation of Clarissa and her world are secondary to its drive to examine how Clarissa's social reality operates, and what individual characters experience in their attempts to navigate that reality.

Though *Jacob's Room*, too, criticises activities taking place in several spheres that could be considered social systems or parts of a macro-level social system, *Mrs Dalloway* sets aside the earlier, more intrusive narrator present in the previous novel and provides direct access to the thoughts of multiple characters, including the protagonists. The intimacy of stream of

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those who identify with Establishment ‘dominion’ and ‘leadership’ and those who resist or are repelled by it.[...] and in the center of this conflict [...] stands Clarissa Dalloway” (130).

consciousness here enables Woolf to present a portion of social reality that is largely unrepresented in *Jacob's Room*. As a result, as J. Hillis Miller puts it, *Mrs Dalloway* “is especially fitted to investigate not so much the depths of individual minds as the nuance of relationship between mind and mind” (53).<sup>37</sup> For this reason, it is possible to discuss subjectivity and the experience of interpellation throughout *Mrs Dalloway* in ways that are not possible with *Jacob's Room*. Because *Mrs Dalloway* provides insight into multiple minds, this novel portrays the subjective experience of living within *various* social systems, and it focuses on the direct relationship between interpellation, subjectivity, and group ontology. Through assemblage theory, what Hillis Miller treats as “an irreconcilable opposition between individuality and universality” (58) is revealed to be inseparable from questions of group ontology and subjectivity, for the individuals in the novel struggle with both social cohesion and isolation in ways that emphasize the troubled relationship between whole and part:

By reason of his or her existence as a conscious human being, each man or woman is alienated from the whole of which he or she is actually, though unwittingly or at best half-consciously, a part. That half-consciousness gives each person a sense of incompleteness. Each person yearns to be joined [...] to the whole from which he or she is separated by the conditions of existence as an individual. (Hillis Miller 58)

Such a limited unity of part and whole, paired with a desire for connection as well as a recognition of its impossibility, creates a serious bind for Woolf's characters. This bind is only made worse by the fact that, despite a desire for unity, “Clarissa [...] shares with Septimus the

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<sup>37</sup> Ban Wang makes a similar point when he argues,

*Mrs Dalloway* provides a good occasion to investigate the connection between the symbolic network of power, the constitution of the subject, and the psychic resistance. The novel can be read not so much as a systematic penetration into individual consciousness as an exploration of the ways in which the individual tries or fails to establish his or her identity as the subject of the state. (179)

The only modification I would want to make to Wang's position on this point is to suggest that the subjectivity this novel explores is by no means limited to one's subjectivity to the state.

need to preserve a private, unviolated self” (Apter 62). In short, Woolf’s presentation of the troubled relationship between part and whole is, ultimately, a critique of the mechanisms of group membership on multiple scales, from the interpersonal to the international. At the same time, though, this examination is predicated on the thoughts and experiences of individuals as they negotiate multiple modes of subjectivity.

This chapter is an account and an analysis of the continual negotiation by individual characters of their multivalent social realities. Throughout the novel, individuals are shaped by the interpersonal groups of which they are members. Yet, so often, they are simultaneously shown to be reshaping the very groups that are shaping them. *Mrs Dalloway* depicts how the nature of a given assemblage emerges from the ongoing attempts of individual characters to temper their behaviour based on how they think they should act in the context of what they interpret to be the thoughts of other group members. *Mrs Dalloway* may even go so far as to imply that individuals’ perceptions and opinions of other group members and social reality as a whole cannot be separated from objective social reality, as the actions of individuals that are a consequence of their opinions provide positive or negative feedback to the entire system, and in such a way, make change either more or less probable.<sup>38</sup> In addition, *Mrs Dalloway* depicts the ways assemblages on several scales can be influenced by assemblages operating on other scales: Clarissa’s relationships with Peter Walsh and Sally Seton (Lady Rosseter) are shaped by class expectations; the behaviour of the married couples depicted in the text (primarily Clarissa and Richard, as well as Rezia and Septimus) are shaped by social expectations regarding how individuals should behave in marriages; and Septimus and Rezia’s survival depends on the

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<sup>38</sup> Such a process of potentially flawed interpretation shaping the objective assemblage itself problematizes DeLanda’s desire for a realist account of assemblage by giving the imaginary (rather than merely the virtual) an ongoing part in determining an assemblage’s ontological status.

beliefs and actions of doctors at the heart of the national medical establishment. As Clarissa's social group forms part of the ruling class, however, her interpersonal relationships may yet have the ability to shape society in ways that would not be as probable as a consequence of similar relationships between less influential individuals. Because *Mrs Dalloway* shows such interactions as taking place on several interdependent scales, all of which have the potential to influence the options open to an individual or group at any given moment, a consideration of the novel's critique of the social system requires a prolonged examination of its treatment of the relationship between subjectivity and group ontology.

### **Clarissa et al.**

Navigating roles as a hostess, a wife (in particular, the wife of a politician), a mother, an enemy, and an old friend, Clarissa Dalloway's subjectivity is far from unified.<sup>39</sup> This multiplicity is hinted at when Clarissa sits in front of a mirror, preparing herself for her party, assembling a particular self out of several component pieces:

How many million times she had seen her face, and always with the same imperceptible contraction! She pursed her lips when she looked in the glass. It was to give her face point. That was her self – pointed; dartlike; definite. That was her self when some effort, some call on her to be her self, drew the parts together, she alone knew how different, how incompatible and composed so for the world only into one centre, one diamond, one woman who sat in her drawing-room and made a meeting-point, a radiancy no doubt in some dull lives, a refuge for the lonely to come to, perhaps; she [...] had tried to be the

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<sup>39</sup> Of course, critics have framed Clarissa's multiplicity using several frameworks. Concerned with how personality survives social life, Morris Philipson, for instance, remarks that "She is one of a couple, the member of a family, a friend to some, and ultimately a hostess to many: one who desires to bring together a number of different people. The rhythm of participating and withdrawing makes possible the continual re-creation of her integration [...] as well as balance in shared experience" (130).

same always, never showing a sign of all the other sides of her – faults, jealousies, vanities, suspicions[.] (40)

This depiction suggests that Woolf “seeks a state of human being prior to its consolidation into personality” and shows, “[o]nly by a conscious ‘assembling’ of her scattered parts into one centre can the heroine attain a social identity as Clarissa Dalloway” (Minow-Pinkney 60, 63).

Not always acknowledging the specific context in which Clarissa is being interpellated, Makiko Minow-Pinkney concludes that Clarissa experiences the particular bind facing women, who must “avoid total submission to the Law of the Father” (81) by striking a balance between being frozen into subject positions and yet grounded by a sense of subject-hood. However, the fractured nature of all subjectivity and the contingency of the particular roles individuals are called to play within specific situations suggest another reading of Clarissa’s actions that has more to do with the complexity of subjectivity and the *need* to assemble. Clarissa’s attempt to assemble herself into a social role depicts a highly nuanced instance of interpellation; the interpellation present here is a “call on her to be her self,” which emphasizes the role of the subject in his or her own interpellation while also suggesting that the self is both conditional and inalienable, for “she alone kn[ows] how different” the visible self is from the secret self. What is more, the apparent paradox at the beginning of the passage – that she always sees something imperceptible – insinuates that Clarissa’s preferred presentation of herself may be at odds with the self that exists for others. That she has seen her face in this way “[h]ow many million times” naturalizes the scene of her composition by associating it with her quotidian routine, even while suggesting that her everyday persona is not her true self, as though essence precedes existence. Further, though her face “always” appears the same, it is only her self “when” necessitated to be so, and this makes it difficult to decide whether the particular scene is dependent or independent



of its context. In brief, the instability and contingency of the scene matches the instability and contingency of Clarissa's subjectivity.

Even the compact and unitary self Clarissa prefers to present, the definite dartlike diamond, does not seem fully compatible with many of the expectations that come with the particular mode of subjectivity she is here creating: the hostess, a self that Clarissa is later shown to perform expertly. Consider, for instance, the subjective malleability required for Clarissa to fulfil her social obligations. When she sees that Professor Brierly is not "hitting it off with little Jim Hutton [...] about Milton" (193), Clarissa interrupts: "She said she loved Bach. So did Hutton. That was the bond between them, and Hutton (a very bad poet) always felt that Mrs Dalloway was far the best of the great ladies who took an interest in art" (193). Hutton's characterization of Clarissa seems a bit thin – Peter would likely find it downright laughable. But because it takes a deep and sincere interest in Bach to bring Brierly and Hutton together, Clarissa is not shy about affecting such an interest, if indeed it is but an affectation. Far from being limited to a single position, that of "a stake driven in at the top of her stairs" (187), as she thinks of herself when her guests begin to enter, Clarissa's role as hostess requires mobility, flexibility, and adaptability. So the novel emphasizes the contingency and relationality of Clarissa's subjectivity, but it also prevents us from viewing this as Clarissa's default state, for the depiction we are given emphasizes that she is behaving according to her conception of the role of hostess for much of the novel.

Clarissa's subjectivity as hostess is further tempered by a passion for establishing Apollonian refuges from Dionysian realities. This is not to say that Clarissa is primarily an Apollonian character. On the contrary, she frequently "feels almost annihilated by existential doubt" (Froula 89), and when contemplating her past with Peter and Sally, it is clear that Clarissa

sees the power of Dionysian truths, while also recognizing the need to find ways to mediate them:

somehow in the streets of London, on the ebb and flow of things, here, there, she survived, Peter survived, lived in each other, she being part, she was positive, of the trees at home [...]. This late age of the world's experience had bred in them all, all men and women, a well of tears. Tears and sorrows; courage and endurance; a perfectly upright and stoical bearing. Think, for example, of the woman she admired most, Lady Bexborough, opening the bazaar. (9-10)

At the opening of this passage, Clarissa has access to a sense of something akin to Nietzschean primordial unity. Her meditation on the interconnectedness of everyone and everything then leads Clarissa to contemplate distinctly Dionysian truths, so that she recognizes a “well of tears” bred in everyone. At the same time, though, she also respects finding a way to moderate such truths, such as “courage and endurance” and “a perfectly upright and stoical bearing.” It is for this reason that Clarissa understands the potential value of social engagements – even those as seemingly petty and artificial as Lady Bexborough’s – as ways of surviving the “well of tears.” And while Clarissa is often engaged with society at its most artificial, she does not mistake the synthetic with the real and meaningful. As Terry Apter notes, “Clarissa may thrive upon the superficiality [...] of society, but it is in solitude that she sinks into that state of consciousness which is the basis for the meaning she cannot discover in any other aspect of her life” (63). She recognizes the desirability of a balance of Apollonian and Dionysian forces, which is especially important given the prevalence of Dionysian truths following the horrors of WWI.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Basing her framework on Sigmund Freud’s *Civilization and its Discontents* (1930), Christine Froula makes a similar observation: “[Clarissa’s] ontology does not permanently allay her ‘horror of death’ but itself forms part of a rich web of imagery, a very garment of consolation, that she spins out moment by moment” (101).

As a matter of fact, the closest thing to a foundational principle governing Clarissa's desire to host parties is her recognition of the fact that civilization, even in its most blatantly artificial form, can provide refuge from what Clarissa recognizes to be the horrific emptiness of daily life. This is a large part of Clarissa's thinking in relation to her role as hostess:

to go deeper, beneath what people said (and these judgements, how superficial, how fragmentary they are!) in her own mind now, what did it mean to her, this thing she called life? Oh, it was very queer. Here was So-and-so in South Kensington; some one up in Bayswater; and somebody else, say, in Mayfair. And she felt quite continuously a sense of their existence; and she felt what a waste; and she felt what a pity; and she felt if only they could be brought together; so she did it. And it was an offering; to combine, to create; but to whom? (133-4)

More than merely "an offering devoted to the effort to bring together people from their separate lives and combine them into oneness" (Hillis Miller 65), Clarissa's urge to combine and create is rooted in her sense of the existential meaninglessness of life. Though she questions to whom her parties are an offering – suggesting she recognizes that no profound, self-contained meaning ultimately grounds her desire to connect people – she also realizes that a lack of intrinsic meaning should not prevent her from acting. While it may be true that "a reading which celebrates her as a great artist whose medium is parties does not seem justified" (Showalter xlv), it is certainly justifiable to view Clarissa's parties as artistic creations, for they are Apollonian edifices erected to provide solace from Dionysian reality.

Clarissa can only assume her role as hostess in certain ways, though, for her role as the wife of a politician greatly shapes the types of Apollonian activities open to her, and thereby has a primary role in shaping her subjectivity throughout the novel. Furthermore, when facing hails

from multiple directions, Clarissa is repeatedly shown to choose the subjectivity offered to her by her relationship with Richard over anyone else, and though much of the novel focuses on Clarissa's relationships with Peter and Sally, Clarissa places her role as friend lower on her subjective hierarchy than her role as wife. This is evident the moment she first assumes a mode of subjectivity which grants primacy to her relationship with Richard is shown to have occurred years earlier, when Clarissa defended him over lunch at Bourton:

Sally at lunch [was] saying something about Dalloway, and calling him "My name is Dalloway"; whereupon Clarissa suddenly stiffened, coloured, in a way she had, and rapped out sharply, "We've had enough of that feeble joke." That was all; but for [Peter] it was precisely as if she had said, "I'm only amusing myself with you; I've an understanding with Richard Dalloway." (69-70)

While the joke seems to have entertained Clarissa previously, in this final instance, Sally's decision to refer to him as "my name is Dalloway!" acts as a powerful interpellation for Clarissa, suggesting she has adopted a mode of subjectivity that can no longer allow her to be amused by such treatment. And while a defense of this sort could fit with several forms of subjectivity, it occurs as the prelude to what Peter thinks of as "The final scene, the terrible scene" (69) in his relationship with Clarissa, during which she tells him, "This is the end" (70). Clarissa's defense of Richard is thus situated as a pivotal moment in her life and is connected to her choice of Richard over Peter.

Clarissa's subjectivity as a wife even seems to have the ability to trump what she perceives to be her duties as a hostess. This may explain Ellie Henderson's eventual inclusion in the party. Protective of the quality of the people attending her party, Clarissa wonders rhetorically, "why should she invite all the dull women in London to her parties?" and she has

“not asked Ellie Henderson to her party [...] on purpose” (129). The decision not to invite Ellie stands until Richard expresses sympathy for “Poor Ellie Henderson” (131), implying that Clarissa should have invited her. After a brief exchange that brings Clarissa’s two modes of subjectivity – hostess and wife – into conflict, Richard gets his way:

If she worried about these parties he would not let her give them. Did she wish she had married Peter? But he must go.

He must be off, he said, getting up.[...]

He returned with a pillow and a quilt.

“An hour’s complete rest after luncheon,” he said. And he went.[...]

He did not see the reasons against asking Ellie Henderson. She would do it, of course, as he wished it. Since he had brought the pillows, she would lie down.... (131-2)

Clarissa’s simple deferral to Richard’s authority seems to denote a patriarchally determined subjectivity. But the free indirect discourse present in the passage may limit this reading, for the possibility that Richard actually states that “he w[ill] not let her give” the parties if she worries too much about them is immediately undermined by the next sentence, for it seems highly unlikely that Richard would follow up such a warning by asking Clarissa if she wishes she had married Peter. In fact, the reiteration of “But he must go” as “He must be off, he said” suggests that Richard simply thinks the first three sentences, and only actually says the fourth. It may simply go without saying that the parties are only “allowed” because of Richard’s graciousness; after all, there is a deferral present in the line “she would do it, of course, as he wished it.” While it is unclear whether the “it” refers to “asking Ellie Henderson” or “l[ying] down” for a nap, the fact that Clarissa does both suggests something about Richard’s power over his wife, and may even imply that she will do whatever he wants. Yet, nestled between Richard’s suggestion that

Ellie ought to be invited and Clarissa's acquiescence to Richard's inclinations is a description of the indispensability of liberty and physical separation in marriage: "there is a dignity in people; a solitude; even between husband and wife a gulf; and that one must respect [...]; for one would not part with it oneself, or take it, against his will, from one's husband, without losing one's independence, one's self-respect – something [...] priceless" (131). As the tone of this passage does not seem to be sarcastic, it is unlikely that Clarissa feels as though she *must* either invite Ellie or take a nap. Instead, it suggests the reason Clarissa is confident her choice to marry Richard rather than Peter was not a mistake: "For in marriage a little licence, a little independence there must be between people living together day in day out in the same house; which Richard gave her, and she him" (8). Though she both naps and invites Ellie, there seems to be a sufficient distance between herself and Richard that she can choose to do both. Clarissa's relationship is not of the sort that Richard commands her to invite Ellie; it is also not of the sort that she disregards his suggestions, even when they will compromise the quality of her party.

Perhaps Clarissa's decision to defer to Richard's wishes can be explained by Peter's idea that behind Clarissa's parties is "a great deal of Dalloway, of course; a great deal of the public-spirited, British Empire, tariff-reform, governing-class spirit" (84). This does not completely explain Clarissa's motivations, though, and underestimates the complexity of her subjectivity. Though Peter wishes to attribute her desire to host parties entirely to Richard, Peter's own description of the events seems to account both for Clarissa's recognition that hosting parties is part of being married to a politician, and for her use of that position to pursue ends not determined purely by her role as a politician's wife: "These parties [...] were all for him, or for her idea of him [...]. Over and over again he had seen her take some raw youth, twist him, turn him, wake him up; set him going. Infinite numbers of dull people conglomerated round her of

course. But odd unexpected people turned up” (84). Clarissa is doubtlessly fulfilling the expectations about what is involved with being not only a member of her social set, but also the wife of a politician. In this context, the process of twisting, turning, and waking up “some raw youth” to “set him going” seems to be part of shaping the future ruling class. Yet, having “a genius for” (84) this type of work and using the parties as opportunities to invite all sorts of “queer fish” (84) suggest that she is able to fulfil her role as the wife of a politician and hostess in unanticipated ways, and to utilize her subject position to connect people who would not otherwise mix.

Clarissa and Richard also form part of a family, and in several depictions of the larger family unit, Clarissa is pulled between the differing requirements of multiple modes of subjectivity, which create conflicts between her roles in the family, on the one hand, and the family’s class and religion, on the other. The primary conflict between Clarissa’s modes of subjectivity comes about as a consequence of Elizabeth’s relationship with her History tutor, Miss Kilman. The fact that Elizabeth “might be falling in love” (12) with Kilman threatens their hetero-normative family unit. The possibility of love also poses a threat to Elizabeth in a way that Clarissa is familiar with because of her relationship with Peter, for she recognizes that “Love destroy[s] too.[...] Think of Peter in love [...]. Horrible passion![...] Degrading passion! she thought, thinking of Kilman and her Elizabeth walking to the Army and Navy Stores” (139). Though some modes of Clarissa’s subjectivity are unsettled by Kilman’s presence, others require that the family continue to employ her, for Kilman

had been badly treated of course; one must make allowances for that, and Richard said she was very able, had a really historical mind. Anyhow they were inseparable, and Elizabeth, her own daughter, went to Communion; and how she dressed, how she treated

people who came to lunch she did not care a bit, it being her experience that the religious ecstasy made people callous (so did causes); dulled their feelings, for Miss Kilman would do anything for the Russians, starved herself for the Austrians, but in private inflicted positive torture, so insensitive was she, dressed in a green mackintosh coat. (12)

Focusing on Kilman and Clarissa as representing Germany and England, Christine Froula argues that, “*Mrs Dalloway* explores the competition, envy, hatred, and aggression between classes and nations that had already engulfed Europe in war and would slowly rise to a boil again in the 1920s and 1930s” (104). Nonetheless, in this passage, the relationship between the national and personal scales is also more complex. Miss Kilman’s marginalization is a consequence of events on a national scale, which place pressure on individuals: a citizen has lost her job because of WWI and “because she would not pretend that the Germans were all villains” (135). But as a consequence of a Liberal form of *noblesse oblige*, the Dalloways see to it that an individual who has been unfairly oppressed because of nationalist biases is not completely ruined. This responsibility is additionally bound to the fact that Miss Kilman appears to be able in her field and is in possession of a form of cultural capital that might help to solidify Elizabeth’s class position. But at the same time, Kilman’s religious affiliations threaten Elizabeth on the level of spiritual conversion, which may cause a fracture in the family by generating internal difference. Additionally, Clarissa associates Kilman’s religious faith with her passion for causes, which places activity on an international scale that helps distant strangers over local activities that improve the lives of those who are immediately present. Clearly, this is at odds with Clarissa’s efforts, which consist exclusively of helping those in her immediate vicinity. It is also the case that, though Kilman’s religious affiliations play an Apollonian role by making it easier to survive



the unpleasant circumstances of her life,<sup>41</sup> Clarissa sees Kilman's use of religion as destabilizing Clarissa's Apollonian refuges, for Clarissa associates her callousness with her "religious ecstasy." Nevertheless, Kilman's ability to disrupt Clarissa's fastidiously groomed social reality is also personally valuable for Clarissa, as it places her in an oppositional assemblage that unsettles an existence that is otherwise in danger of being suffocatingly artificial: "That was satisfying; that was real. Ah, how she hated her [....]; Elizabeth's seducer; the woman who had crept in to steal and defile (Richard would say, What nonsense!). She hated her: she loved her. It was enemies one wanted, not friends" (191-2).

Of course, while Clarissa is able to laugh at Kilman as a mere "dwindling of the monster" (138) when actually facing her – for at this moment, she is able to see a version of Kilman that exceeds the positional risks she poses as one who threatens familial and social instability, and even religious conversion – Clarissa's momentary recognition of Kilman as a source of comedy does not eliminate the positional threats that Kilman poses. Clarissa's momentary ability to laugh at her only comes about when Elizabeth is not present and because Kilman's bodily presence emphasizes her material being rather than her threatening subject position: "second by second, the idea of her diminished [...] she lost her malignity, her size, became second by second merely Miss Kilman, in a mackintosh, whom Heaven knows Clarissa would have liked to help" (138). As soon as she leaves with Elizabeth, Kilman resumes her threatening subject position, so that Clarissa panics and attempts to interpellate Elizabeth back to a sphere she controls: "With a sudden impulse, with a violent anguish, for this woman was taking her daughter from her, Clarissa leant over the bannisters and cried out, 'Remember the party! Remember our party

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<sup>41</sup> Consider, for instance, Kilman muttering, as she walks down the street, "'It is the flesh, it is the flesh,' [...] trying to subdue this turbulent and painful feeling as she walked down Victoria Street. She prayed to God. She could not help being ugly" (141).

tonight!’” (138). Clarissa is attributing joint possession of the party, and thereby interpellating Elizabeth back to her position in the family, by calling it “our” party. In light of this, Clarissa’s earlier realization – “it was not her one hated but the idea of her, which undoubtedly had gathered in to itself a great deal that was not Miss Kilman” (12-3) – is suggestive, for it implies that part of the reason Kilman is repulsive to Clarissa is that she creates conflicts between Clarissa’s modes of subjectivity while also threatening modes of subjectivity that would otherwise be open to Elizabeth.

A similar conflict between competing modes of subjectivity emerges in Clarissa’s reunion with Peter, which has the potential to reactivate a long dormant mode of subjectivity. This reunion shows how difficult it can be to find a place for a past relationship in a contemporary social constellation, as doing so involves not only forming a new mode of subjectivity, but also a process of creating a place for that mode of subjectivity among others – some compatible, and some mutually exclusive.<sup>42</sup> Though Morris Philipson is concerned with the *integration* of one’s personality into the social world, his observation that “the danger to personality is that some present experience will destroy whatever degree of integration the personality already has achieved” (127) also holds true for Clarissa’s and Peter’s active modes of subjectivity as they begin to relate to one another in a new context. Despite the fact that Clarissa

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<sup>42</sup> However much it may mean to her, Clarissa’s relationship with Sally is not shown to provide a powerful interpellative pull on Clarissa throughout *Mrs Dalloway*. It may be objected that Clarissa could also have chosen Sally as a sexual partner, so that the Peter/Richard choice is a false dilemma. As a matter of fact, it is likely true that, “Whereas Clarissa’s relationship with Sally gives her a sense of ‘completion’, a sense of unity, and puts her in touch with her womanhood, her marriage to Dalloway makes her feel incomplete” (Howard 153). However, the possibility of a meaningful sexual relationship between Clarissa and Sally is indeterminate, for we do not have access to Sally’s memory of the kiss, which is, to Clarissa, “the most exquisite moment of her whole life” (38). Social considerations certainly are shown to have had a role in determining how the scene ended, for Clarissa describes the experience of being seen by others as “like running one’s face against a granite wall in the darkness!” (39). Given Sally’s family troubles and how grateful she is to Clarissa for giving her a refuge from these problems – which are, presumably, the reasons why Sally feels as though she “owe[s] Clarissa an enormous amount” (207) – it is possible that the kiss is not, to Sally, the heightened sexual experience that it is to Clarissa. We do know that Clarissa’s ongoing relationship with Sally is hampered by Clarissa’s class expectations – the reason Sally thinks “Clarissa [i]s at heart a snob” (208).

and Peter's reunion takes place in the framework of a relationship that has spanned decades, they are no longer sure about the nature of the interpersonal assemblage they constitute, for they have not seen each other for years and neither fully knows what to expect of the other. Perhaps because of this perspectival gap, Peter's visit begins in a way not entirely dissimilar from the scene between Jacob Flanders and Mrs Norman on the train to Cambridge: the two attempt to follow subtle clues to compare their current interlocutor against the version they used to know, using social markers of identity to understand the group they are now a part of and to determine how they ought to act. It is for this reason that Peter thinks, "I shan't tell her anything about it [...] for she's grown older" (44), and Clarissa thinks, "Exactly the same [...]; the same queer look; the same check suit; a little out of the straight his face is, a little thinner, dryer, perhaps, but he looks awfully well, and just the same" (44). Clarissa tells Peter, "Richard's very well. Richard's at a Committee" (45), both to provide an update on her family and to clarify the parameters of this meeting: she is married, but this meeting will be between them alone.

Yet, their seclusion indicates not only increased intimacy, but also Peter's ongoing marginalization, as Peter's past hostility to Clarissa's understanding of civilization seems to make him incompatible with her current cultural project. When the subject of the party comes up, for instance, Clarissa insists that she will not invite Peter (44). This makes sense, given Peter's history of condemning Clarissa's interest in the beauty of culture: "however beautiful the day might be, and the trees and the grass, and the little girl in pink – Peter never saw a thing of all that. He would put on his spectacles, if she told him to; he would look. It was the state of the world that interested him; Wagner, Pope's poetry, people's characters eternally, and the defects of her own soul" (7-8). Peter's concentration on the Dionysian elements of life – and only on those Apollonian creations that give direct glimpses of them – seems to make him impervious to

the charms of civilization. In fact, when they were younger and he saw Clarissa's predisposition towards projects that fostered civilization, he had been critical of her potential to become "the perfect hostess" (8). But after his long absence, Peter finds himself unusually susceptible to the charms of civilization: "A splendid achievement in its own way, after all, London; the season; civilisation.[... T]here were moments when civilisation, even of this sort, seemed dear to him as a personal possession [...]. Ridiculous enough, still there it is, he thought" (60). Considering this passage, Alice van Buren Kelley suggests, "The fact that he can, at times, understand Clarissa's fascination with externals allows Peter to confess that his devotion to principle and abstraction is not the whole of life" (96). It is important to note, though, that this thought only occurs to Peter following a long absence from England. While things like butlers and chow dogs are ridiculous to Peter (60), he is able to appreciate them at a level that is not merely intellectual, but also emotional. Because Peter's absence from England has deprived him for so long of the Apollonian comforts of English civilization that Clarissa provides access to, Peter is able to notice just how effectively these comforts can provide solace. When Peter asks, "Why wouldn't she ask him to her party?" (45), it seems to indicate a shift from his historical position to such an extent that Clarissa reassesses her own decisions: "he's enchanting! perfectly enchanting! Now I remember how impossible it was ever to make up my mind – and why did I make up my mind – not to marry him? she wondered, that awful summer?" (45). Peter's long absence has given him a new willingness to acknowledge the value of Clarissa's version of civilization, which shifts Clarissa's assessment of the subject positions he is capable of occupying and makes Peter a more tenable participant in Clarissa's social sphere, more susceptible to the balm offered by her party, and more attractive.

Clarissa and Peter then proceed to form the basis for their continuing relationship by establishing a framework of shared memory. But this process proves dangerous to their current relationship, as it also calls to mind prior modes of subjectivity that have been eliminated by Clarissa's marriage to Richard. What becomes a threat begins as an innocent memory: "'Do you remember,' she said, 'how the blinds used to flap at Bourton?'" (45).<sup>43</sup> This memory leads unpredictably to others, as Peter's exclusion from Clarissa's current social sphere reminds him of his outsider position during his time at Bourton: "'They did,' he said; and he remembered breakfasting alone, very awkwardly, with her father; who had died; and he had not written to Clarissa. But he had never got on well with old Parry" (45). As well as reminding Peter of his ongoing marginality, the memory of old Parry also reminds Peter of his negligence as an old friend, who ought to have sent his condolences. Feeling the weight of his negligence, Peter responds with what seems like a non-sequitur: "I often wish I'd got on better with your father" (45). Clarissa replies with what begins as both a defense of her father and an attempt to comfort Peter: "'But he never liked any one who – our friends,' said Clarissa; and could have bitten her tongue for thus reminding Peter that he had wanted to marry her" (45). By accidentally alluding to her decision to marry Richard, Clarissa emphasizes the unhappy termination of the period they have been discussing and the most significant demarcation point separating their historic and contemporary modes of subjectivity. As a consequence, Clarissa's inadvertent reference to his

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<sup>43</sup> More than simply suggesting "an Edenic renewal" (Howard 150), the blowing curtains function as a multivalent symbol throughout *Mrs Dalloway*. On the one hand, blowing curtains represent relief from the ongoing heatwave (mentioned throughout the novel – e.g. 74). They also refer to relief from social stagnation, as the outer world enters the tomb-like world of the ruling class. The memory of curtains blowing at Bourton is also significant for both Clarissa and Peter, to whom it signifies the best of Civilization. For Peter, it is part of the picture of civilization he glimpses through the door of the girl he follows home: "Admirable butlers, tawny chow dogs, halls laid in black and white lozenges with white blinds blowing, Peter saw through the opened door and approved of" (60). For Clarissa, the blowing curtains directly signify a successful party: "The curtain with its flight of birds of Paradise blew out again. And Clarissa saw – she saw Ralph Lyon beat it back, and go on talking. So it wasn't a failure after all! it was going to be all right now – her party. It had begun" (186).

love for her makes Peter re-experience the pain of rejection: “why go back like this to the past? he thought. Why make him think of it again? Why make him suffer, when she had tortured him so infernally?” (45). Clarissa’s slip of the tongue activates a new aspect of their relational subjectivity, for it brings their parting to the surface not just as an event that exists in shared but unspoken memories, but also as an event that now exists discursively.

Clarissa attempts to redirect the conversation, changing the discourse associated with their relationship and thereby changing the parameters of this renewed relationship. The already established discourse prevents this, though, for Clarissa is overwhelmed by the memory of her parents, which Peter’s recent reference to her father has introduced into the conversation:

“Do you remember the lake?” she said [...] under the pressure of an emotion which caught her heart [...]. For she was a child, throwing bread to the ducks, between her parents, and at the same time a grown woman coming to her parents who stood by the lake, holding her life in her arms which, as she neared them, grew larger and larger in her arms, until it became a whole life [...], which she put down by them and said, “This is what I have made of it! This!” And what had she made of it? What, indeed? sitting there sewing this morning with Peter. (46)

As Clarissa has prompted Peter’s suffering, Peter triggers this profoundly disruptive line of thought for Clarissa. As Clarissa holds her life in her hands, she is at once a mother and a child, so that her troubling relationship with Elizabeth meets the loss of her parents and generates a significant Dionysian experience in which she feels herself a failure. This results in a paradox, however: on the one hand, part of what seems to make Clarissa view herself as a failure is that it is Peter she is sitting with; on the other hand, viewing her life as a failure enables her to reassess

the decisions that led to this situation – and the decision with the most significant impact on her life was her decision not to marry Peter.

This paradox emphasizes the intersectional, relational, and provisional features of subjectivity while Clarissa and Peter increasingly utilize these components of their subjectivities to injure one another and to defend themselves. As she contemplates her parents, Clarissa's expression communicates something of her suffering: "her look, passing through all that time and that emotion, reached him doubtfully; settled on him tearfully; and rose and fluttered away, as a bird touches a branch and rises and flutters away. Quite simply she wiped her eyes" (46). Clarissa's tears express both emotion and resignation, functioning to interpellate Peter:

"Yes, yes, yes," he said, as if she drew up to the surface something which positively hurt him as it rose. Stop! Stop! he wanted to cry. For he was not old; his life was not over [...]. Shall I tell her, he thought, or not?[...] But she is too cold, he thought; sewing, with her scissors; Daisy would look ordinary beside Clarissa. And she would think me a failure, which I am in their sense, he thought; in the Dalloways' sense.[...] I detest the smugness of the whole affair, he thought; Richard's doing, not Clarissa's; save that she married him. (47)

In essence, Clarissa's sense that she is a failure causes Peter to feel his own failure, which leads him to a desire to defend himself against the implication that he is too old to make his life a success. Peter's relationship with Daisy seems to be the most plausible defense; yet, watching Clarissa leads Peter to find that Daisy does not compare to her favorably. This only increases his sense of failure. Peter responds by becoming dismissive of Clarissa's life as detestably smug, while absolving Clarissa by blaming Richard. Presumably reading body language that Woolf does not depict, Clarissa, too, becomes resistant, and summons "things she did; the things she

liked; her husband; Elizabeth; her self, in short, which Peter hardly knew now, all to come about her and beat off the enemy” (48). At once defensive and confident that Peter’s life is nothing compared to her own, Clarissa asks, “Well, and what’s happened to you?” (48), which the text frames as a prelude to combat: “So before a battle begins, the horses paw the ground; toss their heads; the light shines on their flanks; their necks curve. So Peter Walsh and Clarissa, sitting side by side on the blue sofa, challenged each other” (48). Here, Clarissa makes explicit her own challenge as a response to what she rightly perceives as a challenge from Peter in a Homeric simile – a form that emphasizes the weight of the dispute by stressing the similarity between their conversation and epic warfare. The comparison to horses is suggestive of a form of opposition that is at once instinctual and passionate, and is especially dangerous because it is not governed by higher human faculties. Like Clarissa, Peter reacts by gaining strength from his membership in assemblages outside of his relationship to Clarissa: “His powers chafed and tossed in him. He assembled from different quarters all sorts of things; praise; his career at Oxford; his marriage, which she knew nothing whatever about; how he had loved; and altogether done his job” (48). That Peter has not been altogether successful at Oxford, in love, or at his job is not relevant; all that is important at the moment is that any accomplishments in these areas have been achieved without Clarissa. It is also for this reason that Peter’s assertion, “I am in love” (48), is so powerful, for it suggests a meaningful experience that she has no part in – in either his life or her own: “He was in love! Not with her. With some younger woman, of course” (49). In short, as Clarissa and Peter increasingly feel that their lives have been failures, they look to fend off these feelings by asserting the value of their membership in assemblages that have formed in the void left by the marriage they could have had.



Because this combination of attraction, persecution, defensiveness, and opposition is similar to their relationship in the Bourton days, and because love is once again the subject of their dialogue, Clarissa and Peter draw increasingly close to reactivating the modes of subjectivity associated with their previous relationship. The free indirect discourse seems to be channeling Clarissa when it states that “this statue must be brought from its height and set down between them” (49), for just as actually setting eyes on Kilman seems to neutralize her threat, making Daisy the subject of discourse seems likely to diminish Peter’s advantage. This is the result when Peter introduces Daisy as “A married woman, unfortunately, [...] the wife of a Major in the Indian Army.[...] She has [...] two small children; a boy and a girl; and I have come over to see my lawyers about the divorce” (49). Even though Peter has “placed her in this ridiculous way before Clarissa” (49), he feels that Daisy and her family “became more and more lovely as Clarissa looked at them” (49). Clarissa does not judge them favourably, though, and uses her knowledge of Peter to conclude that Daisy has manipulated him: “She flattered him; she fooled him, thought Clarissa; shaping the woman [...] with three strokes of a knife.[...] All his life long Peter had been fooled like that;[...] thank Heaven she had refused to marry him! Still, he was in love” (50). Though she is thankful that she did not marry him, she remains jealous of the fact that he is in love, and sympathizes with Peter for failing in a way that is so consistent with all of his previous failings. When she confronts him about what he plans to do, Peter intends to defend himself, but loses control of his emotions: “I know what I’m up against, he thought, running his finger along the blade of his knife, Clarissa and Dalloway and all the rest of them; but I’ll show Clarissa – and then to his utter surprise, [...] he burst into tears; wept; wept without the least shame” (50). Seeing himself as assaulted by not only Clarissa, but also all of the other members of Clarissa’s social circle, this is one of the many instances in which Peter involuntary

fondles his knife, mixing sex and violence in what functions as “condensed imagery [that] succinctly connects phallus and weapon” (K. Phillips 17), as he readies himself for a counter-offensive. But Peter’s intended assertion of virility and dominance backfires as it collapses into an exhibition of his impotence and emotion. Nonetheless, his failure draws Clarissa to him in a way a success could not have, and Peter’s tears function as just as powerful an interpellation for her as her tears have for him: “Clarissa had leant forward, taken his hand, drawn him to her, kissed him” (50). Her realization – “[i]f I had married him, this gaiety would have been [hers] all day!” (51) – is not entirely facetious, for she feels “plumes like pampas grass in a tropic gale in her breast, which, subsiding, le[ave] her holding his hand, patting his knee and, feeling as she s[its] back extraordinarily at her ease with him and light-hearted” (51). Clarissa compares this moment of heightened intimacy and emotion with Peter to her sexless marriage with Richard, which reminds her that Richard has gone to lunch with Lady Bruton, and makes her feel as though “it [i]s all over for her.[...] He has left me; I am alone for ever” (51). Her sense of isolation has the potential to lead Clarissa to do anything, including beginning an affair with Peter, as it eliminates the subjective conflict Clarissa has been experiencing: if she is tragically alone, then she only has to consider herself, and not the other members of her family and social circle – and Peter’s companionship offers a solution to this frightening isolation.

Though Peter attempts to utilize Clarissa’s increased familiarity and perhaps evident suffering to prompt her to develop an increasingly intimate relationship, Clarissa’s role as mother interpellates her back into contemporary modes of subjectivity. When Peter attempts to invite Clarissa to speak unfavourably about Richard – “‘Tell me,’ he said, seizing her by the shoulders. ‘Are you happy, Clarissa? Does Richard?’” (52) – Elizabeth interrupts by entering, and restores the previous order by re-establishing Clarissa’s obligations to her family:

“Here is my Elizabeth,” said Clarissa, emotionally, histrionically, perhaps.

“How d’y do?” said Elizabeth coming forward.

The sound of Big Ben striking the half-hour struck out between them with extraordinary vigour, as if a young man, strong, indifferent, inconsiderate, were swinging dumb-bells this way and that.

“Hullo, Elizabeth!” cried Peter, stuffing his handkerchief into his pocket, going quickly to her, saying “Good-bye, Clarissa” without looking at her, leaving the room quickly, and running downstairs and opening the hall door. (52)

The emotion behind Clarissa’s introduction of Elizabeth suggests shame at having an inappropriate moment interrupted, exposes her relief that it has been interrupted, and – as Peter, himself, guesses (53) – hints that her family life is not as pleasant as she might wish. Big Ben’s striking as Elizabeth enters the room marks the reassertion of order and the resumption of Clarissa’s routine. With the reinstatement of Clarissa’s maternal/familial subjectivity, the potential for a new beginning evaporates, and there is nothing Peter can do but depart. In a scene that anticipates her interpellation to a departing Elizabeth, however, she follows Peter out, calling after him: “‘Peter! Peter![...] My party to-night! Remember my party to-night!’ [...] having to raise her voice against the roar of the open air, and, overwhelmed by the traffic and the sound of all the clocks striking” (52). Breaking her word that she would not invite him, Clarissa attempts to shout over the background noise created by the rest of London and reaffirms her role as hostess, a mode of subjectivity that makes it possible for her to avoid another decisive break.

Though she cannot have an inappropriately intimate relationship with Peter, she does want to use her party as a way to maintain a relationship with him in a less dangerous and more public setting by incorporating him into her current social circle. Peter hears this hail into a

socially mediated relationship in a way that highlights its Apollonian elements: “Remember my party, remember my party, said Peter Walsh as he stepped down the street, speaking to himself rhythmically, in time with the flow of the sound, the direct downright sound of Big Ben striking the half-hour” (52). That Clarissa’s words merge with the striking of Big Ben, as the two unify rhythmically, foregrounds order and social mediation. Clearly, Clarissa’s is an invitation into a form of subjectivity that does not threaten pre-established conventions or upset her place in various assemblages, while also gesturing towards her desire to use her position in these assemblages to facilitate the formation of new connections between Peter and different elements of her sphere.

### **Septimus, Rezia, and Evans**

Though Clarissa is able to utilize the Apollonian to mediate Dionysian truths, Septimus’s Apollonian frameworks have been shattered by his experience fighting in WWI. We can conclude from the fact that Septimus went “to France to save an England which consisted almost entirely of Shakespeare’s plays and Miss Isabel Pole in a green dress walking in a square” (94) that he appreciated the comforts of civilization before fighting in the war. However, following his return, Septimus oscillates violently between Apollonian and Dionysian, without the former appearing to have any lasting power to mediate the latter. Such an oscillation is evident when Rezia explains that her wedding ring will no longer fit on her finger:

He dropped her hand. Their marriage was over, he thought, with agony, with relief. The rope was cut; he mounted; he was free, as it was decreed that he, Septimus, the lord of men, should be free; alone [...].

No crime; love; he repeated, fumbling for his card and pencil, when a Skye terrier snuffed his trousers and he started in an agony of fear. It was turning into a man![...] It was horrible, terrible to see a dog become a man! At once the dog trotted away. (73-4)

Though Elizabeth Outka combines Bruno Latour's actor-network theory, "discoveries in psychology on the impact that trauma may have on an individual's ability to think metaphorically, and the often peculiar relations between literary metaphor and WWI" (2) to analyze Septimus's trauma in terms of his conflation of metaphor and literal events, she does not discuss the symbolism of Rezia's wedding ring.<sup>44</sup> The wedding ring symbolizes the last material bond between Septimus and civilization, via his marriage. Septimus interprets this symbol literally, so that once the ring is gone, his marriage is over and he is free to embrace the full horror of existence. Paradoxically, this existential horror involves both a sense of profound isolation and a unity with all material reality. The breakdown of order is so absolute that even the barrier between beast and human dissolves, and a Skye terrier transforms into a man. This calls to mind Septimus's earlier experience in the park, when he feels connected to everything through the trees: "they beckoned; leaves were alive; trees were alive. And the leaves being connected by millions of fibres with his own body, there on the seat, fanned it up and down; when the branch stretched he, too, made that statement" (24). In both instances, Septimus's "sense of a definable self is missing, so that instead of coming into contact with the external world, he literally feels one with it" (Kelley 99). What is more, and as John McGuigan suggests, Septimus's "disillusion [...] is more profound than disappointment – his whole way of seeing and valuing the world is shattered" (130). I would agree, and consider this shattering to have taken place in Septimus's protective Apollonian layer; all the same, though shattered and effectively useless, this layer has

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<sup>44</sup> Rather, she focuses on Septimus's belief that Evans has risen from the dead.

not disappeared. Septimus's haphazard connection of Apollonian and Dionysian here leads to him reading the material components of his surroundings as coded, so that the position and movement of a tree branch become a "statement" that Septimus repeats. Grandiose messages such as "No crime; love" are able to make their appearance, albeit only briefly, for while "black feelings are unendurable and consistently alternate with their opposites, with pastoral visions of a world of eternal beauty and harmony" (Zwerdling 132), it should also be noted that the positive feelings are just as unendurable. Both show Septimus struggling to find explanations that fit his wartime experiences into a framework that will make them meaningful; all of Septimus's systems of meaning have been so damaged by his wartime experiences, though, that they are unable to remain intact for more than a few moments at a time.

Septimus's trouble fitting his experience into consistent and stable discursive structures is magnified by a form of subjectivity that results from his past – and, in a sense, continuing – relationship with his former commanding officer, Evans. Though Septimus and Evans had become inseparable during the war, Septimus feels startlingly little upon Evans's death:

It was a case of two dogs playing on a hearth-rug; one worrying a paper screw, snarling, snapping, giving a pinch, now and then, at the old dog's ear; the other lying somnolent, blinking at the fire, raising a paw, turning and growling good-temperedly.[...] But when Evans [...] was killed, just before the Armistice, in Italy, Septimus, far from showing any emotion or recognising that here was the end of a friendship, congratulated himself upon feeling very little and very reasonably. The War had taught him. It was sublime. (94-5)

Their relationship seems to be "the ethereal kind that developed among the combatants, now necessarily free of class distinctions, confronting a common enemy and a common danger, with a common loyalty and solidarity" (Panichas 239), and even after Evans's death, Septimus

continues to feel the pull of his subjectivity to this relationship. While initially it seems to Septimus “sublime” to feel nothing when Evans dies, he soon begins to view this lack of feeling as “the sin for which human nature had condemned him to death” (99). The original sin, for Septimus, is a lack of emotion that does not seem to satisfy his obligations within the context of their relationship, since the death of a loved one is an interpellation to grieve and to mourn. It leads him to commit other acts that he also considers to be crimes (99), all of which he believes warrant punishment.

Septimus seems to consider the other significant crime that results from Evans’s death criminal because it imposes another form of subjectivity on him that he is likewise unable to satisfy. His marriage to Rezia is a consequence of how Septimus judges his reaction to his friend’s death, for “he became engaged one evening when the panic was on him – that he could not feel” (95). His proposal to Lucrezia results in yet another assemblage of which he is unable to operate as a satisfactory member. Once again, Septimus sees his inability to feel as the culprit: “His wife was crying, and he felt nothing; only each time she sobbed in this profound, this silent, this hopeless way, he descended another step into the pit” (99). That he feels himself descend while simultaneously feeling nothing is not necessarily a paradox, for Septimus recognizes on an intellectual level that, as he is her husband, Rezia’s crying should upset him. Once again, Septimus suffers from his recognition that he is unable to perform the type of subjectivity he feels is demanded of him under the circumstances. This powerful interpellation that Septimus is nonetheless powerless to respond to is then articulated by Dr Holmes: “Didn’t that give her a very odd idea of English husbands? Didn’t one owe perhaps a duty to one’s wife?[...] So he was deserted. The whole world was clamouring: Kill yourself, kill yourself, for our sakes” (100-1). Of course, Septimus knows that it would “be better to do something instead of lying in bed”

(101), and he feels the duty to his wife all too powerfully; he is lying in bed as a result of how horrified he is to find he is unable to feel the pain that should be caused by his wife crying.

Septimus is being interpellated here in a way consistent with an Althusserian treatment of subjectivity, but his suffering is magnified because multiple modes of subjectivity are interpellating him, and because he knows he cannot respond appropriately to any of them. It is for this reason that Septimus becomes increasingly desperate as the hail shifts from the abstract (Septimus knows he should be upset) to the concrete (Holmes telling Septimus to do his duty to his wife), while also incorporating a call to national subjectivity (Rezia's "idea of English husbands" is at stake). He perceives the calls as demands he kill himself for the sake of others because he knows how much suffering his non-voluntary abnegation of his marital subjectivity is causing. Though his inability to feel as a result of Evans's death is his first crime, his inability to feel for Rezia is perhaps the more serious crime, for it causes profound and ongoing suffering for someone his role as husband demands he save from suffering at all costs, and this crime, according to Holmes, is also a failure to do his duty for England.

Likewise, Rezia is frequently horrified to find that she cannot perform the subjectivity she believes is expected of her as a wife. As a matter of fact, many of Septimus and Rezia's interactions function as a series of interpellations that neither of them is able to respond to appropriately. Consider, for instance, Woolf's depiction of them in the park:

"Look, look, Septimus!" she cried. For Dr Holmes had told her to make her husband (who had nothing whatever seriously the matter with him but was a little out of sorts) take an interest in things outside himself.

So, thought Septimus, looking up, they are signaling to me. Not indeed in actual words; that is, he could not read the language yet; but it was plain enough, this beauty,



this exquisite beauty, and tears filled his eyes as he looked at the smoke words  
languishing and melting in the sky[.] (23)

The passage opens with Rezia's attempt to fulfill her duties as outlined by Dr Holmes. She perceives Septimus's odd behavior, which interpellates her, making it necessary for Rezia in turn to hail Septimus to behave as she believes he ought to. Septimus's frame of reference is so damaged that he misses the actual interpellation from his wife, and perceives a hail as coming from some mysterious "they," on which he is unable to act because he does not understand their message. Septimus is not behaving as a subject of a materially existing assemblage, but the experience of interpellation is, for him, no different than it would be in an assemblage that did exist: he still perceives a hail, and still believes he has a responsibility to act on it, and it is this belief – not the ontological validity of the hail – that produces subjectivity. As Septimus struggles to understand the message he perceives as addressed to him, he inadvertently interpellates Rezia, as his odd behavior re-triggers her obligation as outlined by Holmes:

But they beckoned; leaves were alive; trees were alive.[...] A child cried. Rightly  
far away a horn sounded. All taken together meant the birth of a new religion –  
"Septimus!" said Rezia. He started violently. People must notice.  
"I am going to walk to the fountain and back," she said. (24)

Rezia is frustrated because her inability to successfully cause Septimus to behave in ways Holmes would approve of makes it impossible for her to perform her role successfully. But also at issue here is Rezia's embarrassment, which she feels as a consequence of her husband's odd behavior in front of other people. Rezia interprets the gazes of the strangers as an unspoken but nonetheless powerful interpellation to something like normality, as the strangers expect particular types of behavior in the context of a beautiful day in the park.

Because Rezia's subjectivity makes demands of her that she, like Septimus, is unable to satisfy, she begins to suffer the same sort of agony as Septimus. This is clear from the consequences of her attempts to find help for her husband: "For she could stand it no longer. Dr Holmes might say there was nothing the matter. Far rather would she that he were dead! She could not sit beside him when he stared so and did not see her and made everything terrible; sky and tree, children playing, dragging carts, blowing whistles, falling down; all were terrible. And he would not kill himself; and she could tell no one" (24-5). Watching him, knowing that he is not interested in what society has to offer, knowing that he only wants to die, Rezia cannot help but feel alone, abandoned, and in the clutches of a terrible world. In this case, "[h]er desperate isolation is due to the fact that she is not alone, that she is intolerably close to her husband [...]; she is so much a part of him that his nightmare becomes hers; she wishes him dead because his vision is infectious" (Apter 70). As Septimus's excess of unmediated Dionysian reality makes it impossible for him to find any stable meaning, Rezia's relationship with Septimus allows her to see through the veil of civilization and directly into the Dionysian truths that are revealed when one watches a loved one suffer without being able to help.

Rezia's feelings of isolation are increased further by her geographical location and the consequent impossibility of membership in other assemblages. As she stands in Regent's Park, she experiences the depths of existential solitude as a result of the fact that her decision to marry Septimus and move to England has separated Rezia from her family and community:

I am alone; I am alone! she cried, by the fountain in Regent's Park [...], as perhaps at midnight, when all boundaries are lost, the country reverts to its ancient shape, as the Romans saw it, lying cloudy, when they landed, and the hills had no names and rivers wound they knew not where – such was her darkness; when suddenly, as if a shelf were

shot forth and she stood on it, she said how she was his wife, married years ago in Milan, his wife, and would never, never tell that he was mad! Turning, the shelf fell; down, down she dropped. For he was gone, she thought – gone, as he threatened, to kill himself – to throw himself under a cart! But no; there he was; still sitting alone on the seat, in his shabby overcoat, his legs crossed, staring, talking aloud. (26)

Rezia's experience here functions like a photographic negative of Betty Flanders knitting in *Jacob's Room*: rather than experiencing an atemporal unity through the landscape with the Romans and all other occupants (past and present), Rezia experiences an atemporal isolation that connects her to the last common ancestors of the English and herself, the Romans, before they named the rivers and founded communities that still remain. To her, all is nameless, and she is isolated in an unknown and unforgiving landscape. Her only available mode of subjectivity at this moment is as Septimus's wife, for that alone provides "a shelf" she is able to stand on to remain suspended safely above the darkness. Rezia's realization that she would be alone if not for her role as Septimus's wife makes it impossible to "tell that he was mad," for the only form of subjectivity currently open to her, on which her survival appears to depend, seems to require that she protect her husband at all costs. But Septimus's momentary disappearance reminds her yet again that she may not be able to perform this mode of subjectivity, as it may be beyond her ability to protect her husband. Understandably, as she and Septimus continue through the park, Rezia feels as though she is on the verge of destruction, "like a bird sheltering under the thin hollow of a leaf, who blinks at the sun when the leaf moves; starts at the crack of a dry twig. She was exposed; she was surrounded by the enormous trees, vast clouds of an indifferent world, exposed; tortured; and why should she suffer?" (71-2). Without the psychic fortification of the Apollonian that comes from having a firm and definite place in a stable group, Rezia feels

unprotected from the harsh and unforgiving Dionysian facts of mere existence, devoid of any socially constructed meaning.

The mutually destructive modes of subjectivity that follow from Septimus's wartime experience and ongoing illness are made all the worse by a serious discursive gap that limits the ability of Rezia and Septimus to communicate with one another. When Rezia contemplates Evans's death, for example, she understands that he had been "a great friend of Septimus's, and he had been killed in the War" (72). When she proceeds to think that "such things happen to every one" (72), it is clear that she is simply not able to understand the difference between Septimus's experiences and most people's, nor is she able to understand that the war has shattered his ability to project a coherent and consistent meaning onto life. As she reflects upon Septimus's state of mind, she continues to attempt to normalize his experiences, equate them with her own, and frame Septimus's condition as a choice: "Every one has friends who were killed in the War. Every one gives up something when they marry. She had given up her home.[...] But Septimus let himself think about horrible things, as she could too, if she tried.[...] Yet he could be happy when he chose" (72). Though it is the case that "[t]he parallel sentence structures suggest the losses are equal in her eyes – a startling statement of the painfulness of the break marriage has made in her life" (Tyler 64), it is also true that this similarity is a consequence of Rezia's close relationship with Septimus. Furthermore, this parallel suffering brings Rezia into even closer proximity with Septimus, seeming to make meaningful communication between the two of them more possible. Nonetheless, Rezia is still unable to understand Septimus and Septimus is unable to communicate with Rezia, for she lacks Septimus's experiences, and Septimus lacks a coherent and consistent discursive structure. Quite simply, what the soldier has experienced in WWI is so alien from any prior experience that it is

impossible to find the words equal to explaining it, and for someone without a similar experience no amount of explanation would be adequate. This dual lack creates an instance of what Jean-Francois Lyotard refers to as a differend, “the unstable state and instant of language wherein something which must be put into phrases cannot yet be” (13). As it is only by “institut[ing] idioms which do not yet exist” (Lyotard 13) – for preserving the discursive status quo ensures that what is now unsayable shall remain so – it is not entirely surprising to see Septimus muttering, “Communication is health; communication is happiness, communication” (102). John McGuigan may not be overstating the situation when he reads Septimus as “proposing communication as a new direction for mental health” (133). Much of Septimus’s suffering is the result of his inability either to escape from or to participate meaningfully in the groups of which he is a member because of his discursive instability and isolation. Clearly, being able to form discursive connections, especially with Rezia, would be critical to Septimus’s survival.

It is because communication offers hope for people like Septimus that people like Bradshaw are depicted so negatively. Bradshaw’s best course of action would be to reformulate existing Apollonian structures to account for the perspectives of the returning soldiers, and to begin to rebuild the soldiers’ systems of meaning. But from the narrator’s description of the scenes that take place in his offices, it appears that Bradshaw does the opposite, reasserting the discourse of privileged authority that Woolf treats as constitutive of modern war:

[some patients] called Sir William to his face a damnable humbug; questioned, even more impiously, life itself. Why live? they demanded. Sir William replied that life was good. Certainly Lady Bradshaw in ostrich feathers hung over the mantelpiece, and as for his income it was quite twelve thousand a year. But to us, they protested, life has given no such bounty. He acquiesced. They lacked a sense of proportion. And perhaps, after all,

there is no God? He shrugged his shoulders. In short, this living or not living is an affair of our own? But there they were mistaken. Sir William had a friend in Surrey where they taught [...] a sense of proportion. There were, moreover, family affection; honour; courage; and a brilliant career. All of these had in Sir William a resolute champion. (111)

Rather than adapting his discourses according to his patients' complaints, Bradshaw demands they change their thinking to mirror his. However, the Dionysian truths soldiers such as Septimus have acquired at the front render the prevailing Apollonian order useless and nothing more than a cruel lie, and it is unlikely that they would be able to adopt an Apollonian order as transparently ludicrous as Bradshaw's. As a matter of fact, Bradshaw's Apollonian framework, which is nothing more than a mixture of the meaningless "Proportion" and the real and obligatory "Conversion," offers hollow rewards: Lady Bradshaw's magnificence and the fact that Bradshaw has money and family affection might convince Bradshaw that life is worth living, but notions of honour, courage, and the promise of a brilliant career are shown to be sources of suffering for Septimus. Since war has already flattened the man's identity by placing him into a situation that removes all but one mode of subjectivity – as in the scenes of anonymous, mass death in *Jacob's Room* – returning soldiers are unlikely to so willingly submit to a repeat of this process of macro-scale interpellation again, especially as a means to social rewards bound up with the prevailing discourse that resulted in them fighting in the first place. It is in this sense that "the symbolic system, [...] through Sir William, attempts to mold Septimus into a fixed and stable subject of the state" (Wang 186).

When his facile pronouncements on Proportion fail to effect the discursive Conversion he is after – and it seems inevitable that they should fail often when encountering patients such as Septimus – Bradshaw transforms himself from an Ideological State Apparatus into a Repressive

State Apparatus, and the police are utilized to “take care, down in Surrey, that these unsocial impulses, bred more than anything by the lack of good blood, [a]re held in control” (111). Far from producing new avenues for communication, this threat of violent intervention gives Bradshaw’s patients a good reason for not wanting to communicate with him. This is likely part of the reason Septimus is desperate that Rezia should destroy his writings before Bradshaw shows up (159-60). Clearly, Bradshaw’s repressive use of his own utterly inflexible Apollonian order is likely to lead to internment for all traumatized and depressed patients who make frank attempts to discuss their problems.

### **Connections and Conclusions**

However unsympathetic Bradshaw is, his presence at Clarissa’s party – and, in particular, Lady Bradshaw’s stating, during the party, “A young man [...] had killed himself” (201) – provides the stimulus for an epiphany that resonates with the novel’s characterizations of action on several scales. The existential element of Clarissa’s epiphany functions largely on a personal register, but only because it rests on the relationship between the personal and the social in an examination of her role that has consequences for how Clarissa views herself, her immediate social circle, and even her class: “She had once thrown a shilling into the Serpentine, never anything more. But he had flung it away.[...] A thing there was that mattered; a thing, wreathed about with chatter, defaced, obscured in her own life, let drop every day in corruption, lies, chatter. This he had preserved” (202). Here, Septimus’s suicide preserves “a human desire for purity or unadulterated experience that, for Clarissa, the ‘chatter’ and ‘corruption’ of life sometimes obscure” (Olson 57). What is more, Clarissa recognizes Septimus’s suicide as allowing something like the Dionysian to break open her hermetically sealed Apollonian social sphere, leading her to reflect on the relationship between her repression of Dionysian truths and

their broader cultural repressions. Clarissa's epiphany also echoes Septimus's mutterings about the importance of communication, suggesting an interpersonal relationship even with this stranger: "Death was an attempt to communicate; people feeling the impossibility of reaching the centre which, mystically, evaded them; closeness drew apart" (202). As well as understanding her connection to Septimus, Clarissa also understands the importance of overcoming the differend, so that finding new ways to converse when there are important truths that cannot otherwise be communicated may be a cause worthy enough to justify the sacrifice of one's life. Further, Clarissa is able to grasp the paradoxically unbridgeable nearness that has been increasing the suffering of both Septimus and Rezia. Her recognition of these facts serves as a startling revelation about how life operates on small-scale personal and interpersonal levels.

At the same time, the strikingly accurate information Clarissa is able to draw from her sympathy for Septimus leads her to a portion of her epiphany that functions on the scale of the medical establishment:

there were the poets and thinkers. Suppose he had had that passion, and had gone to Sir William Bradshaw, a great doctor yet to her obscurely evil, [...] capable of some indescribable outrage – forcing your soul, that was it – if this young man had gone to him, and Sir William had impressed him, like that, with his power, might he not then have said (indeed she felt it now), Life is made intolerable; they make life intolerable, men like that? (202)

Clarissa realizes that, to a certain type of individual, "Sir William's is the voice of *thanatos*" (Panichas 240), at least in the sense that Nietzsche's model sets up the Apollonian as being as undesirable from an exclusively Dionysian perspective as the Dionysian is from an Apollonian perspective, and raises the possibility that the Apollonian could have the power to drive a



sufficiently Dionysian person to suicide. Clarissa suddenly understands that the combination of creativity and absolute disillusion present in a person like Septimus would make anything preferable to being coerced by someone whose role as doctor has given him total power over one's life. Clearly, this realization has significant implications about how the psychological establishment should engage with individuals like Septimus. Clarissa then experiences both intense horror, akin to Rezia's feeling that she is a bird under a leaf, and profound joy similar to Septimus's upon making his grand discoveries:

Then [...] there was the terror; the overwhelming incapacity, one's parents giving it into one's hands, this life, to be lived to the end, to be walked with serenely; there was in the depths of her heart an awful fear. Even now, quite often if Richard had not been there reading the *Times*, so that she could crouch like a bird and gradually revive, send roaring up that immeasurable delight, rubbing stick to stick, one thing with another, she must have perished. But that young man had killed himself.[...]

It was due to Richard; she had never been so happy. (202-3)

Clarissa's experience here is both Apollonian and Dionysian, as the *Times*, Septimus's suicide, the overpowering sense of life's fragility, and Richard's presence all play their part. It is at once startlingly solitary ("the overwhelming incapacity" and "in the depths of her heart an awful fear"), rooted in her marriage ("if Richard had not been there"), connected to international affairs ("reading the *Times*"), and may even be connected to all humanity in the way that Dionysian experiences often produce primordial unity ("the overwhelming incapacity, one's parents giving it into one's hands, this life"). Clarissa's epiphany is all of these things and more; it is a writerly epiphany, which draws its power from the fact that it is able to resonate on countless different registers simultaneously, with diverse truths to reveal to different audiences.

Despite this ambivalence, critics often ascribe a precise meaning or critical position to *Mrs Dalloway*, rarely failing to describe the end of the novel as being either positive/optimistic or negative/pessimistic. Such pronouncements are almost invariably determined by the particular social scale on which the critic has chosen to focus. For instance, Hillis Miller suggests that “The party which forms the concluding scene of the novel does succeed in bringing people together [...]. Clarissa’s party transforms each guest from his usual self into a new social self, a self outside of the self of participation in the general presence of others” (66). In this case, Hillis Miller is able to be optimistic about the end of the novel because he has chosen to focus on the interpersonal scale. Similarly, though McGuigan frames his reading in political terms, his focus on anarchism leads him to positively charge the personal scale as a space free of institutional interference, so that he is able to conclude that “as the novel closes, [Clarissa] has exceeded all institutional labels and categories. She simply ‘is’” (143). Likewise, Douglas Howard’s focus on the interpersonal enables him to speak with the full force of optimism: “As the circle that made up that pivotal summer at Bourton is gradually restored into a paradisaal state of union and as the various consciousnesses that make up the party are joined in ‘oneness’, the landscape reflects the establishment of a new Edenic order” (156). Zwerdling sets radical limits on the scales that can plausibly foster optimistic readings, though, when he points out that “the class under examination in the novel is living on borrowed time” because “[t]he Conservative Prime Minister who appears at Clarissa’s party at the end of the book remained in office only until January 1924, when he was succeeded by the first Labour Prime Minister” (121). Tellingly, the readings of Hillis Miller, McGuigan, and Howard stand in stark contrast to K. Phillips’s reading, which focuses on one larger political scale:

The last words of the book wonderfully parody the grand reunion [...]. The curtain bangs down prematurely, not because their greeting is ineffable but because there is no scene to show. When Peter [... and Clarissa] finally draw together, they bring to each other the insubstantiality of two ghosts. The conjunction of an absence with an absence nets the blank that follows “THE END.” (25)

If one chooses, as K. Phillips does, to focus almost exclusively on the nation and the empire, then there is no way that Clarissa and Peter can be viewed in a positive light, and Clarissa’s epiphany seems empty, for it is unlikely that it could change the international political system. Ultimately, the ambivalence of *Mrs Dalloway* resists attempts to articulate any *telos*, let alone one that is based on action on a single orbit, and critics who are able to maintain a degree of ambivalence typically do so by focusing on more than one scale. For example, Elaine Showalter is able to straddle micro and macro to observe that “[t]his society will not undergo radical change” while also arguing that, though “her identification with Septimus is perhaps sentimental, nonetheless it is part of her realization of her own limits and possibility” (xlv). The fact that there should be such a variety of readings makes sense, for Clarissa may experience a meaningful change, as may Sally and Peter, but even if they do, they will likely not change the psychological establishment personally, nor will they be able to have a significant or direct impact on national and imperial approaches to civilization.

The fact of the matter is that if the social system being criticized in *Mrs Dalloway* is merely the nation or the empire, it is difficult to account for the enormous amount of space seemingly wasted on personal thoughts and interpersonal interactions that have little to nothing to do with activity on these scales. Yet, too much of the novel *is* spent focusing on national and international issues for *Mrs Dalloway* to be simply about personal and interpersonal interactions.

Furthermore, a great deal of activity on several intermediary scales prevents readings that focus exclusively on the relationship between individual and nation as the only two poles. It is not that any of these positions are demonstrably wrong; they are problematic because they are built upon scale biases that are not present in the novel.

Focusing on these intermediary scales and how they connect to smaller- and larger-scale assemblages provides a way to account for more of the novel's primary foci. Whereas *Jacob's Room* does not depict Jacob's subjective experience, *Mrs Dalloway* uses Clarissa to show the navigation of multiple mutually exclusive assemblages. While the earlier novel portrays the subjective flattening that leads to Jacob's demise, the latter uses Septimus to show that the small- and large-scale assemblages that failed young men like Jacob continues to fail those who, like Septimus, have survived the war. This reading also draws attention to a failing in DeLanda's mode of assemblage theory, for his insistence on ontological validity makes it difficult to account for the fact that imaginary assemblages or those grounded in delusion – such as Septimus's ongoing sense of obligation to Evans or his unification with the natural world – appear to him to present just as compelling interpellations as the demands of his wife or his doctor. Similarly, Clarissa's sense of connection to Septimus at the end of the novel does not, by any means, suggest an ontologically valid assemblage, but the epiphany it generates has the ability to change how she perceives her roles in any other number of assemblages.

*Jacob's Room* and *Mrs Dalloway* establish the need to balance Apollonian and Dionysian impulses – to meaningfully ground social life by creating an account of the horrors of isolation and chaos that make society necessary – in a way that does not lead to unnecessary participation in war but can, nevertheless, survive experiences of war. This need gains urgency in *Between the Acts*, where the inevitability of WWII suggests an impending repetition of all of society's most

deadly errors. While the former two novels use literature to examine such themes, *Between the Acts* also self-reflexively considers the role of literature in responding to and participating in the errors that lead to death and suffering that do not stop with a declaration of peace.

### Conventional, Oppositional, and Existential Assemblage in *Between the Acts*

A sense of solidarity sufficient to make government by discussion possible can be generated without much difficulty in a family, such as the Fuggers or Rothschilds, in a small religious body such as the Quakers, in a barbarous tribe, or in a nation at war or in danger of war. But outside pressure is all but indispensable: the members of a group hang together for fear of hanging separately. A common peril is much the easiest way of producing homogeneity. This, however, affords no solution of the problem of power in the world as a whole. We wish to prevent the perils – e.g. war – which at present cause cohesion, but we do not wish to destroy social co-operation. (Bertrand Russell, *Power: A New Social Analysis* 18)

Set just before the outbreak of World War Two, “on a June day in 1939” (69), *Between the Acts* (1941) foregrounds international opposition, and Woolf’s April 26, 1938, diary entry describes the novel in a way that emphasizes the collective over the individual:

Why not *Poyntzet Hall*: a centre: all literature discussed in connection with real little incongruous living humour: and anything that comes into my head; but “I” rejected: “We” substituted: to whom at the end there shall be an invocation? “We”... the composed of many different things... we all life, all art, all waifs and strays – a rambling capricious but somehow unified whole[.] (*A Writer’s Diary* 289-90)

Though it is tempting, given this description, to approach *Between the Acts* as a novel only interested in collectives, there are reasons not to do so. For instance, as Michele Pridmore-Brown notes, “factionalization ensues within the individual as well as within the group.[...] For [Woolf], each person is a multiplicity of characters and identities in the intervals and silences of the script” (417).<sup>45</sup> That this factionalization operates in both individuals and groups suggests

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<sup>45</sup> Similarly, Zwerdling’s reading of the pageant does account quite explicitly for the relationship between individual and community: “It is inevitable that the pageant’s concluding sketch, ‘Present Time. Ourselves,’ should stress the utter fragmentation of life in the modern period, in which the medieval sense of a human community has finally been shattered” (319). This formulation, however, still emphasizes the text’s focus on the collective at the expense of the individual.

there is comparable complexity in the novel's depictions of both, so that it is dangerous to focus on one at the exclusion of the other. In fact, *Between the Acts* contains such complex depictions of subjectivity that it may be more accurate to say that "'I' is not simply rejected but, moreover, interrogated: the 'I' of identity and its attendant role as author, be it of history, of the novel, or of the self, is disrupted and disturbed. And the 'We' that takes its place is a very queer one" (Delsandro 106-7). Such queerness would seem to suggest that, though characters may represent larger social forces, they also function on a literal level, and that both social forces and individuals operate according to complex part/whole dynamics – an interpretation that may account for Woolf's stated interest in "a rambling capricious but somehow unified whole" – a description that could characterize Deleuze's model of the emergence of larval subjects – more successfully than can an exclusive focus on "we" over "I."

For this reason, despite the novel's emphasis on opposition and Woolf's apparent desire to focus on groups, one cannot reduce the activity depicted in *Between the Acts* to the macro-scale interactions between nations in the looming war. To do so would not be entirely unlike Colonel Mayhew, one of the audience members of La Trobe's pageant, who wonders, "Why leave out the British Army? What's history without the Army, eh?" (141). The critical version of such a position assumes that the national/international is automatically the privileged scale and ignores the fact that both La Trobe's pageant and *Between the Acts* call such assumptions into question.

By noting, "since [prehistoric] time the British Isles had been formed, separated from other nations by a body of water" and arguing that "[t]his historical fact is given symbolic resonance in Woolf's novel" (323), Alex Zwerdling touches on a key element of both the pageant and the novel, which I would argue reverberates on various spatiotemporal scales.

Clearly, the approaching war throws the isolation of subjective and geographical islands into sharp relief. But whereas Bertrand Russell's statement from *Power* contemplates the coming war in terms of the unity that can be gained by having an enemy – as he puts it, “a common peril is much the easiest way of producing homogeneity” – and expresses a wish to foster such unity without having to face the horrific consequences of war, *Between the Acts* considers the reality of this dilemma on several scales of human activity, while enabling an interrogation of what it is like to be simultaneously a subject of assemblages on such a broad range of spatial and temporal scales. On the one hand, Miss La Trobe's pageant and *Between the Acts* pose fundamental questions about the existential foundations of group membership. In her pageant, La Trobe critiques prevailing nationalist narratives in an attempt to foster a new version of these narratives at a local level, while also alternating Apollonian and Dionysian elements as she attempts to achieve a balance, in an attempt to create deep and meaningful bonds of community between the audience members. On the other hand, the members of the Oliver household and their guests struggle with the practical problems that come about as a consequence of being subjects of various assemblages, many of which are threatened by the catastrophic macro-order dissolution of war. For these characters, it is not easy to be a brother, a sister, a product of a generation, a mother, a wife, a husband, an amateur poet, a member of a sex and gender, a sexual creature, a subject of the state, and a part of the European community, especially as these roles do not always demand compatible actions. The characters depicted in *Between the Acts* struggle in their various subjective capacities to make sense of what seem to be the expectations of others and to act in accordance with the limited sense they *are* able to make of their worlds and the equally complex subjectivities of those around them. This is a difficult enough task under ordinary circumstances that becomes all but impossible as renewed global conflict draws nearer.



## The Pageant

Miss La Trobe's pageant responds to increasing international strife by emphasizing the thankless work that goes into building civilization and by syncopating her presentation of British collective memory. That said, the pageant intervenes with the functioning of a nationalist collective memory only on a local and communal scale. While Miss La Trobe's production is, through Woolf's own vision, located both "in an English village and in the 'whole world' – that open country of the mind, the unbounded regions of thought and feeling that are the outsider's dwelling place" (Froula 290), in the novel, the pageant does not have a national, let alone international, audience, being addressed to the occupants of the particular English village in which its only performance takes place. While *Between the Acts* "presents the community as a huge individual, a collective psyche that needs narratives and imagination in order to obtain memory, and needs memory in order to know who it is" (Benziman 61), the pageant does not so much create this communal memory as redirect existing British collective memory among a particular group.<sup>46</sup> In this context, Catherine Driscoll's association of the pageant with what Nietzsche terms "critical history" seems appropriate,<sup>47</sup> for La Trobe remains concerned with history, but wishes to reframe it to serve survival in the immediate context of contemporary life.

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<sup>46</sup> For example, Kathy J. Phillips makes note of the gap between Reason personified's glorification of eighteenth-century imperialism and her almost parenthetical commentary: "For all Reason's lyricism, she cannot avoid revealing the stark means by which her cornucopia is filled: somebody else's suffering" (203). In similar ways, throughout the pageant, La Trobe frequently presents a more or less conventional scene, but slightly refocused, so as to expose the biases and crimes concealed in predominant British collective memory. It is this process that Erica Delsandro refers to as "queering history," a critical mode of writing and reading that "proposes not the impossibility of history, literature, and self, but rather, the possibility of engaging in a queer relationship with historical time, literary narratives, and personal identity" (108).

<sup>47</sup> Driscoll identifies a tension between Nietzsche's modes of history as running throughout *Between the Acts*: "Nietzsche's distinction between monumental history, antiquarian history, and critical history might also be identified with the tensions in *Between the Acts* between the historical claims made by the great lives or the army, the watch or the paintings, and the gramophone or the pageant" (152). For Driscoll, the tension between these modes is important, for by "foregrounding multiple forms of modernist history" the novel "allow[s] them to be more entangled than discrete" (152), suggesting the true complexity of modernist history. For an explanation of his three modes of history, see Nietzsche's "On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life," particularly pages 96-107.

As well as engaging in a work of critical history to reframe how the audience members view themselves in relation to their communities by producing a newly revised version of British collective memory, La Trobe's pageant also engages with the audience on a more fundamental level, manipulating the existential basis of group membership itself. It is for this reason that, throughout the novel, the pageant oscillates between Apollonian and Dionysian as it struggles to balance elements of each. The first such oscillation occurs when the chorus emerges, following a speech by England, personified as a child, and denaturalizes civilization by focusing on the work involved with creating it:

The Villagers were singing, but half their words were blown away.

Cutting the roads... up to the hill top... we climbed. Down in the valley... sow,  
wild boar, hog, rhinoceros, reindeer... Dug ourselves in to the hill top... Ground roots  
between stones... Ground corn... till we too... lay under g—r—o—u—n—d.... (72)

As Madelyn Detloff explains, “the staging of Miss La Trobe's pageant of English history outside, where players and audience alike are subject to the weather, reinforces the importance of [...] shelters” (42) from the natural world. But the labour that such edifices require matters here, and the lyrics of the song “suggest that although history's great men and monuments are subject to change and decay, the exploitation of masses of anonymous toilers, unrecorded by official historiography, remains constant” (Spiropoulou 151). In addition, the chorus hints at the transitory nature of life: the statement that the members of the chorus also lie under the ground – “ground” spelled out, letter by letter, emphasizing the fact that their lives have also been ground into oblivion as grain is ground into flour – leads to a contemplation of the terrible amount of labour required to maintain civilization, and of the Dionysian truth that countless anonymous people have exhausted their lives in a process that is always incomplete and usually thankless.

The fact that words are lost in the wind highlights the vulnerability of the products of human activity to the ravages of the natural world, and that adequate communication is frequently impossible.

Dionysian reality does not remain the centre of attention for long, though, and is soon replaced by an assertion of Apollonian illusion. This happens when the voice of the chorus is succeeded by a popular song “ground out” by the gramophone:

*Armed against fate*

*The valiant Rhoderick*

*Armed and valiant*

*Bold and blatant*

*Firm elatant*

*See the warriors – here they come... (72)*

Madelyn Moore insists that Miss La Trobe “plays the war-song which she knows will rivet the attention of her audience” (164). But the word “rivet” suggests heightened attention that does not fit with the audience’s apparent relaxation: “The pompous popular tune brayed and blared.[...] Muscles loosened; ice cracked. The stout lady in the middle began to beat time with her hand on her chair” (72). The audience is drawn into the song and swept up in its rhythms not because of the content or tone of the lyrics – which refer to a battle against fate and oncoming soldiers – but rather because the song is popular as propagandistic war rhetoric in June of 1939. Because the audience engages with the song collectively and uncritically, at a level free of profound truths about the fleeting nature of their existence or the dangers associated with the approach of war, they reveal that the music functions primarily as an Apollonian element, allowing the community to temporarily disregard the realities made explicit by the lyrics.

Although Miss La Trobe's pageant is largely structured around balancing Apollonian and Dionysian elements in this way, equilibrium breaks down in the "Present time. Ourselves" section of the pageant because she does not provide a transparently mimetic performance: "All their nerves were on edge. They sat exposed. The machine ticked. There was no music. The horns of cars on the high road were heard. And the swish of trees" (160). While it is Miss La Trobe's intention to use "[s]wallows, cows etc. [...] to douche them, with present-time reality" (161), she is attempting to do so without even gesturing towards the mediation provided by representational artifice. As a result, the audience fails to see this moment as a section of the pageant and thinks it is merely unmediated reality, and simply endures the awkward moment of what they assume is a brief pause between the acts of the pageant. Miss La Trobe's reaction to the audience marks the indispensable role of illusion to her artistic project: "Grating her fingers in the bark, she damned the audience. Panic seized her. Blood seemed to pour from her shoes. This is death, death, death, she noted in the margin of her mind; when illusion fails. Unable to lift her hand, she stood facing the audience" (161-2). With the loss of artifice, La Trobe finds herself experiencing the terrible anxiety of unmediated Dionysian reality. As she stands facing the audience and mortality itself, she is literally paralyzed, and cannot even lift her hand. Here, nature steps in, providing "what art fails to give alone" (Kelley 246), and Woolf's pathetic fallacy aligns Miss La Trobe with all existence: "And then the shower fell, sudden, profuse. / No one had seen the cloud coming. There it was, black, swollen, on top of them. Down it poured like all the people in the world weeping. Tears, Tears. Tears" (162). Nevertheless, it is also important to note Woolf's role here: though Miss La Trobe's failure to present Dionysian reality through a sufficiently Apollonian lens causes her audience to miss the point she is trying to make, Woolf does not make the same mistake. By deploying a literary technique – nature representing a

character's emotions – Woolf enables the reader to see the emptiness of reality through a veil of creation, but in such a way that the veil is recognizable as a necessary creation. Though the entire pageant functions as “a *mise-en-abyme* of the book that frames it” (Kermode xxx), the effect is, here, most pronounced, for Woolf uses the Apollonian to show us the Dionysian, but does so in a way that denaturalizes the presentation by emphasizing its artificiality.

La Trobe's momentary paralysis then leads to a spur-of-the-moment performance that briefly achieves some balance of Apollonian and Dionysian forces. Having been saved by the intervention of the natural world, the artist makes another attempt to represent Dionysian reality, this time through an Apollonian filter, which emphasizes that the audience members are being forced to participate in the pageant as unwitting players: “looking glasses darted, flashed, exposed. People in the back rows stood up to see the fun. Down they sat, caught themselves... What an awful show-up! [...] And Lord! the jangle and the din! The very cows joined in. Walloping, tail lashing, the reticence of nature was undone, and the barriers which should divide Man the Master from the Brute were dissolved” (165). Even though this intrusive use of mirrors makes them uncomfortable, the audience experiences Miss La Trobe's point: at this moment, they *are* material reality and civilization; they are history unfolding. The anxiety this causes is so complete that Woolf represents it as like Nietzschean primordial unity, and even the division between human and animal falls away. Interestingly, the only person who is unperturbed by this is “Mrs Manresa who, facing herself in the glass, used it as a glass; had out her mirror; powdered her nose; and moved one curl, disturbed by the breeze, to its place” (167). Though Manresa's reaction has been explained by the assertion “she is all body” in the sense that “she combines in herself all the physicality of life, without flowing over into child-bearing and so becoming one of those who foster life's perpetuity” (Kelley 235), her self-possession also marks her willing

embrace of the Apollonian, which makes her, as Frank Kermode puts it, “coarsely equal to this moment” (xxxii). But excepting Mrs Manresa, the audience experiences the breakdown of the walls between history and present, as well as between the actors and themselves, as deeply disturbing.

Miss La Trobe’s pageant and *Between the Acts* interrogate how group membership operates through an engagement with existential questions. They highlight the struggle to represent those profound truths that are able create the deepest bonds but cannot be expressed linguistically, for to do so involves relying on the artifice intrinsic to language. Language necessarily distances us from such truths the more it purports to expose them, for the artificial can, at best, provide a metaphorical representation of the Dionysian. This is part of the message delivered by the “megaphonic, anonymous, loud-speaking [...] voice” (167-8) – presumably La Trobe’s – that speaks at the end of the pageant, demanding, “*Look at ourselves, ladies and gentlemen! Then at the wall; and ask how’s this wall, the great wall, which we call, perhaps miscall, civilization, to be built by* (here the mirrors flicked and flashed) *orts, scraps and fragments like ourselves?*” (169). When the voice points out its change “*to a loftier strain*” (169), but notes parenthetically, “*(by way of a rhyme, mark ye)*” (169), it is highlighting the extent to which artificial constructs enable humans to build both meaning and civilized life. While the voice asks, “*All you can see of yourself in scraps, orts and fragments?*” (169), highlighting the profound isolation that can accompany the Dionysian, it also demands that the audience “*listen to the gramophone affirming*” (169), for the music brings the scattered and isolated members of the group into alignment with one another: “Like quicksilver sliding, filings magnetized, the distracted united” (169). The assemblage suggested by these metallurgic metaphors, though, is momentary and fleeting, and as it recedes (now like a tide), it leaves a void: “raising their eyes

(Mrs Manresa's were wet; for an instant tears ravaged her powder) they saw, as waters withdrawing leave visible a tramp's old boot, a man in a clergyman's collar surreptitiously mounting a soap-box" (170). While Manresa is unaffected by the mirrors, she, too, is now momentarily vulnerable to the emotional impact of the emptiness left by the receding unity.

The comparison of the Reverend G.W. Streatfield to "a tramp's old boot" is certainly not a positive one, though he is also "their representative spokesman; their symbol; themselves" (171), and he struggles to express their collective experience in a way consistent with a socially accepted Apollonian model. The process of putting such an experience into language is doomed to fail in significant ways. In "On Truth and Lying in an Extra-Moral Sense,"<sup>48</sup> Nietzsche highlights the nature of this problem when he describes "truth" as "a mobile army of metaphors, metonyms, anthropomorphisms, in short, a sum of human relations which were poetically and rhetorically heightened, transferred, and adorned, and after long use seem solid, canonical, and binding to a nation. Truths are illusions about which it has been forgotten that they *are* illusions" (250). As is consistent with *The Birth of Tragedy*, all of us – including La Trobe and Streatfield – have no sure way of communicating overwhelmingly intense existential experiences. This is especially problematic for authors such as Woolf or La Trobe, who are struggling to represent overwhelming Dionysian truths linguistically. But the novel's larger point is that it is also a problem for all of us as we attempt to interact with others and function as members of larger assemblages, for the important things able to make the deepest connections are the most difficult to express linguistically, whereas the superficial presents the easiest way to foster some connection, however shallow. In the end, the most we can hope for is a positive balance of the

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<sup>48</sup> "Über Wahrheit und Lüge im aussermoralischen Sinne" (1896).

two. At best, the artificial can be used to gesture towards that which it cannot represent directly, and this is what both Woolf's novel and La Trobe's pageant are attempting.

### **A Few of the Oliver Assemblages**

The audience is not the only assemblage *Between the Acts* is concerned with, however; the novel also examines a constellation of assemblages involving the Oliver family, considering both the existentialist grounding of these relationships and the influence of relationality on subjectivity. Bart, a widower and retired colonial officer, and Lucy, his widow sister, form an assemblage in which their shared experiences are emphasized mostly as that which should go without saying. Though shared memories exist between the two – the two mentioned in particular are “the house by the sea. And the lobster” (26) and “the play [they] acted in the nursery” (88) – Lucy's invocations to remember do not succeed in fostering a renewed connection with her brother, for in the first instance he responds simply by nodding, and in the second, he emphasizes that their shared memory is of a dead world: “But for us, my old Cindy [...] the game's over” (88). While revealing the sympathy between them, such moments do not lead to the generation of new discourse or create new bonds,<sup>49</sup> and they all too often do little more than annoy Bart.

Though Bart rejects the power of their shared memories, their exchanges are highly coded and habitual, established in the past and in a shared and now discursive history, and they suggest

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<sup>49</sup> Similarly, Lucy and Bart are both parties to the family's collective memory, but this, too, seems to do little to generate meaningful interpersonal connections. The text discusses the portrait of “the man holding his horse by the rein” from “about 1750” who was “a talk producer” (33). But the shared knowledge of the talk producer fails so completely at producing talk that the narrator comments, “Empty, empty, empty; silent, silent, silent. The room was a shell, singing of what was before time was; a vase stood in the heart of the house, alabaster, smooth, cold, holding the still, distilled essence of emptiness, silence” (33-4). This silence seems to be the rule in the household. Though history permeates every aspect of their lives, the Oliver household seems to remember in silence rather than collectively: “So they always said when in summer they sat there to drink coffee, if they had guests. When they were alone, they said nothing. They looked at the view; they looked at what they knew, to see if what they knew might perhaps be different today. Most days it was the same” (48).



an imbalance of Apollonian and Dionysian by showing the two to be bound by a high degree of subjective automation. The most telling example occurs when they discuss the weather ahead of the yearly pageant. When Lucy notes, “If it’s fine, [...] they’ll act on the terrace” and Bart responds, “And if it’s wet [...] in the Barn” (20), Isa knows from experience how the conversation will progress: “The words were like the first peal of a chime of bells. As the first peals, you hear the second; as the second peals, you hear the third. So [...] she knew [what Lucy] would say next” (20). The comparison to bells is evocative, for this conversation emerges automatically, without variation, according to a well-established pattern, so that it marks the passage of time in a particular place, like the bells in *Jacob’s Room* and *Mrs Dalloway*, but also calls to mind an experiment in Pavlovian conditioning: “Then, for the seventh time in succession, they both looked out of the window” (20). Their discourse is not merely verbal, for the fact that they both look out of the window suggests a physical component to this repeated performance.

Their relationship only breaks from this curiously empty ritual when the oppositional element of their relationship emerges as the discussion turns to religion. When Lucy insists, “It’s very unsettled. It’ll rain, I’m afraid. We can only pray,” and touches her crucifix, Bart responds, “And provide umbrellas,” momentarily upsetting his sister: “Lucy flushed. He had struck her faith. When she said ‘pray,’ he added ‘umbrellas.’ She half covered the cross with her fingers. She shrank; she cowered” (21). Clearly, Bart knows he is hurting his sister by drawing attention to the fact that he does not take her beliefs seriously. Bart’s interpretation of his sister’s spiritual beliefs – “How imperceptive her religion made her! The fumes of that incense obscured the human heart” (183) – is also, clearly, an attitude of which she is aware.<sup>50</sup> But just as Bart’s mention

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<sup>50</sup> Lucy’s recollection of a fishing expedition with her brother as children makes it clear that his reactions hold to a long established pattern of behaviour: “Once, she remembered, he had made her take the fish off the hook herself. The blood had shocked her – ‘Oh!’ she had cried – for the gills were full of blood. And he had growled: ‘Cindy!’

of “umbrellas” strikes at Lucy’s faith, she must know that her mention of “prayer” strikes at Bart’s faithlessness. Throughout the novel, these characters are associated with discourses they view as indispensable to their overall subjectivity: as the narrator puts it, “she belong[s] to the unifiers; he to the separatists” (106). They both frequently make their membership in these groups apparent to unsettle each other and consolidate their own positions.

The significance of their relationship lies in its oppositional nature. Galia Benziman points out that Lucy’s “entire existence revolves around the collective and the universal. For her, everyone, herself included, is merely a particle in a huge, inseparable self”; and though Bart is bound up with a particular “collective identity as well, [his] is based on separation and aggression: Bart Oliver’s nationalized personal biography is that of empire, wars, and conquests; his discourse is replete with images of civilization, industry, law, and order” (Benziman 56). The salient point here is that “[e]ach of these master-narratives is represented by Woolf as dangerous and potentially destructive if isolated” (56). The disagreements between Bart and Lucy bring these two positions into a dialogic relationship. The type oppositional assemblage at work here does not produce as deeply dialogic a relationship as one might expect, though, for there is no chance that either will convince the other to change. But even though this oppositional subjectivity is also well-formed and pre-determined, it does not consist of utterances that have actually been made before, and seems to require the continued generation of discourse.

What is more, while showing Lucy imagining Bart’s point of view even though he is absent, the novel also suggests the possibility that even this sort of intransigent oppositional dialogue has more positive potential than silence:

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The ghost of that morning in the meadow was in her mind as she replaced the hammer where it belonged on one shelf” (19).

Fish had faith, [Lucy] reasoned. They trust us because we've never caught 'em. But her brother would reply: "That's greed." "Their beauty!" she protested. "Sex," he would say. "Who makes sex susceptible to beauty?" she would argue. He shrugged who? Why? Silenced, she returned to her private vision; of beauty which is goodness; the sea on which we float. Mostly impervious, but surely every boat sometimes leaks? (185)

As a subject of the assemblage she and her brother form, Lucy has internalized an opinion contrary to the one she consciously holds, and though her particular belief system retains enough integrity to keep her afloat on the Dionysian waters of life's catastrophes, the possibility that her boat may leak adds legitimacy to her opinions by forcing her to face the possibility that her beliefs may be wrong and to consider her reasons for utilizing them. While it is not clear that Bart experiences corresponding moments, this oppositional element seems part of the fabric of their relationship, for provocations to disagree function interpellatively and call the siblings to renew their membership in the relationship by once again disagreeing. It may be consistent with Lucy's role as a unifier to provoke her brother into disagreeing, for in so doing she utilizes Bart's role as a separatist to draw him back into their relationship.

The novel's primary oppositional assemblage consists of the married couple, Isa and Giles, both of whom fill their days satisfying the expectations placed upon subject positions they would rather not occupy. As Isa's reading of *The Times* makes clear, her life is so insular and unpleasant that she identifies with the violent rape of another woman:

as her father-in-law had dropped *The Times*, she took it and read: "A horse with a green tail..." which was fantastic. Next, "The guard at Whitehall..." which was romantic and then, building word upon word she read: "The troopers told her the horse had a green tail; but she found it was just an ordinary horse. And they dragged her up to the barrack room

where she was thrown upon a bed. Then one of the troopers removed part of her clothing, and she screamed and hit him about the face....”

That was real; so real that on the mahogany door panels she saw the Arch in Whitehall; through the Arch the barrack room; in the barrack room the bed, and on the bed the girl was screaming and hitting him about the face, when the door (for in fact it was a door) opened and in came Mrs Swithin carrying a hammer. (18-9)

Karin Westman views Isa’s rather casual approach to reading the newspaper as an act of resistance, arguing that, “By being inattentive to *The Times*, by daydreaming, Isa resists the interpellative hail of its pages [...]. Isa resists replicating the structure of the habitus” (9). Yet, Isa’s initial scanning of the article suggests indifference more than resistance, for she seems to begin at random, not even bothering to read the headlines before proceeding. Such indifference suggests detachment from the broader world, if not from her habitus, and this alienation is further emphasized by the assertion that “[f]or her generation, the newspaper was a book” (18) for one does not look for news about important current events in books. She decides to read the newspaper only when her father-in-law leaves it sitting nearby, and because it is a convenient solution to her indecision about what to read: “Keats and Shelley; Yeats and Donne. Or perhaps not a poem; a life. The life of Garibaldi. The life of Lord Palmerston. Or perhaps not a person’s life; a county’s. *The Antiquities of Durham* [...]. Or not a life at all, but science – Eddington, Darwin, or Jeans” (18). In this instance, book reading seems to imply an indifference and detachment from the events described within the pages so that she is able to approach them as a diversion: she first approaches the text as fantasy, as romance. The expectations placed upon Isa as a subject are, simply, so local that it seems like a stretch to think she is being interpellated *to read* the newspaper.

Tellingly, the piece of the article Isa reads in *The Times* has interpellative power once she realizes what it is about, so that, “[t]he girl’s real screams not only foil Isa’s silence but hail her to speech” (Froula 296). While it is not clear that Isa is able to respond satisfactorily to *this* hail, she does seem to hear some version of it, for as she echoes the article throughout the day, it becomes conflated with her own experience reading it. Her reading of the article, for example, infiltrates Bart and Lucy’s yearly clockwork discussion about the favorability of the weather for a pageant: “this year beneath the chime she heard: ‘The girl screamed and hit him about the face with a hammer’” (20). This comparison between her plight and that of the woman in the article, which goes so far as to dissolve the line between Isa as reader and the woman in the article, suggests a high degree of dissatisfaction with the expectations placed upon her as a wife and mother who is largely charged with managing the daily operation of the household. Much in *Between the Acts* suggests that Isa’s dissatisfaction with the routine of the Oliver household is related to serious marital problems. This is implied by the characterization of Isa as she contemplates her verse: “The words weren’t worth writing in the book bound like an account book in case Giles suspected. ‘Abortive,’ was the word that expressed her. She never came out of a shop, for example, with the clothes she admired; nor did her figure [...] please her” (14). The fact that Isa conceals that she writes verse from her husband is suggestive enough, but worse still is that the chain of logic moves from her husband to Isa’s perpetual failure and her belief that she routinely fails to satisfy her desires, and finally to her displeasure with her own body.

She is not entirely dissimilar to Giles, though, and both characters are equally trapped in subject positions they are ill-suited for. Isa may think that the word “abortive” characterizes her particularly well, but it “also describes virtually every character in the book” (McWhirter 793), especially Giles: “Given his choice, he would have chosen to farm. But he was not given his

choice. So one thing led to another; and the conglomeration of things pressed you flat; held you fast, like a fish in water. So he came for the week-end, and changed” (43). Far from having naturalized his subject positions as a stockbroker and husband, Giles unhappily plays the roles assigned to him. The only thing that seems to endear the despondent Giles to the isolated Isa is her ability to think about their relationship in absurdly conventional terms: “‘He is my husband, [...] The father of my children.’ It worked, that old cliché; she felt pride; and affection; then pride again in herself, whom he had chosen” (44). But these clichés are not initially shown to form deeper connections between the two.

Both Isa and Giles recognize the empty conventionality that keeps them together, and both are aware of the personal consequences of the subject positions they continue to occupy, so that, as David McWhirter explains, they do little more than “self-consciously enact a ghastly parody of the traditional heterosexual marriage plot” (796). Further, neither is under any illusions about the other’s suffering. Nevertheless, they do not provide one another with solace. Consider, for instance, Giles’s difficulty sitting down to watch the pageant: “This afternoon he wasn’t Giles Oliver come to see the villagers act their annual pageant; manacled to a rock he was, and forced passively to behold indescribable horror. His face showed it; and Isa, not knowing what to say, abruptly, half purposely, knocked over a coffee cup” (55). Though she recognizes that he is pouting, Isa also recognizes the profundity of Giles’s suffering. In fact, this comparison between Giles and Prometheus is not unlike several of the descriptions of Septimus’s suffering in *Mrs Dalloway*. But whereas Rezia responds to her husband’s suffering by suffering as deeply, Isa causes a distraction so that she is able to escape what seems to be little more than a vaguely awkward and embarrassing situation. Clearly, as it exists on a day in June, 1939, Isa and Giles’s marriage seems to exist for no reason other than to satisfy expectations.

While social convention and cliché prevent a final separation, as a married couple in the midst of a continued disagreement, Isa and Giles form a more aggressively negative form of oppositional assemblage than do Bart and Lucy. Yet, this assemblage, too, has the ability to unite through disagreement. When Giles and Bart return, having changed after the conclusion of the play, Isa once more feels the draw of cliché, but finds it exhausting: “Isa looked down at his feet – patent leather pumps. ‘Our representative, our spokesman,’ she sneered. Yet he was extraordinarily handsome. ‘The father of my children, whom I love and hate.’ Love and hate – how they tore her asunder! Surely it was time someone invented a new plot, or that the author came out from the bushes” (194). Isa’s sneer at the “representative, [...] spokesman” echoes the narrator’s earlier description of the Reverend Streatfield as he attempts to make sense of the pageant.<sup>51</sup> When she then reproduces the ‘father of my children’ cliché, she superimposes multiple patriarchal roles onto Giles while drawing upon Streatfield’s ineptness to indicate the absurdity of her husband.

For most of the novel, Isa and Giles’s oppositional subjectivity leads them to generate other micro-scale assemblages, such as Isa’s relationship with William Dodge, which attempt to replicate the unity offered by their marriage without the liabilities. It would indeed appear that, initially, “[f]ear and oppression connect Isa and Dodge” (Delsandro 97), for Isa immediately recognizes herself in Dodge’s anxiety: “‘Why’s he afraid?’ Isabella asked herself. A poor specimen he was; afraid to stick up for his own beliefs – just as she was afraid, of her husband”

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<sup>51</sup> “What an intolerable constriction, contraction, and reduction to simplified absurdity he was to be sure! Of all incongruous sights a clergyman in the livery of his servitude to the summing up was the most grotesque and entire. He opened his mouth. O Lord, protect and preserve us from words the defilers, from words the impure! [...] “He looked at the audience; then up at the sky. The whole lot of them, gentles and simples, felt embarrassed, for him, for themselves. There he stood their representative spokesman; their symbol; themselves; a butt, a clod, laughed at by looking-glasses; ignored by the cows, condemned by the clouds which continued their majestic rearrangement of the celestial landscape; an irrelevant forked stake in the flow and majesty of the summer silent world” (170-1).

(46). Isa's recognition of someone similar to herself develops into a relationship during the pageant's first intermission. As Isa, swept up by the rhythms of the play's language, privately responds to the conversations of those around her in verse, William Dodge appears at her side: "He smiled. She smiled. They were conspirators; each murmuring some song" (94). The conspiracy, here, is rooted both in their marginality and in their indifference to the national gossip going on around them, so that as other audience members discuss the goings on of the Queen, King, and the Duke of Windsor (formerly King Edward VIII), Isa and Dodge hijack and critique this narrative by laying upon it transparently conventional verse. When Isa explains, "It's the play [...]. The play keeps running in my head," Dodge responds by quoting the script directly: "Hail, sweet Carinthia. My love. My life" (94). In essence, Isa invites Dodge to participate in a private discourse that is not available to the others in the area, and he accepts. At the same time, their use of overt linguistic conventionality undermines the conventionality of the conversation going on around them, and the inside joke they create from the exchanges of the other audience members legitimizes their fledgling assemblage, transforming them into insiders, albeit in a group that only consists of the two of them. That the play enables the mode of discourse Isa and Dodge use here is also significant, for it suggests that, whatever effect the play may or may not be having on the other members of the audience, it provides these two with a form of communication that facilitates the formation of this small-scale assemblage of outsiders.

The fledgling Isa/Dodge assemblage is immediately threatened, however, when Isa is hailed into other mutually exclusive forms of subjectivity. Even though Dodge longs for Isa to increase their intimacy by inviting him away from the others – "He wished she would say: 'Come along. I'll show you the greenhouse, the pig sty, or the stable'" (95) – she does not do so.



Instead, Isa is hailed into a mode of subjectivity incompatible with her potential to form solitary and intimate relationships with men other than her husband:

Then [Dodge] saw her face change, as if she had got out of one dress and put on another.

A small boy battled his way through the crowd, striking against skirts and trousers as if he were swimming blindly.

“Here!” she cried raising her arm.

He made a bee-line for her. He was her little boy, apparently, her son, her George.

She gave him cake; then a mug of milk. Then Nurse came up. Then again she changed her dress. This time, from the expression in her eyes it was apparently something in the nature of a strait waistcoat. Hirsute, handsome, virile, the young man in blue jacket and brass buttons, standing in a beam of dusty light, was her husband. And she his wife. (95)

This description suggests “her own history is revealed as that of disguises as Isa performs the roles of mother and wife in a script that lineage and domesticity have apparently authored for her” (Delsandro 98-9). In fact, the interpellations depicted here are so manifest that Dodge compares her change in countenance to a change in wardrobe, calling to mind her husband’s immediate recognition of the fact that he ought to change his clothing upon realizing that company is at his house (42). George’s blind search through the crowd successfully interpellates Isa into a maternal mode of subjectivity, for she responds both verbally – shouting “Here!” – and raises her arm, setting herself apart from, while also marking her location in, the larger crowd. Giving her son cake and milk before the nanny arrives rather than continuing to exchange verse with Dodge, Isa is doing what is expected of her as a mother rather than acting according to what her new friend might want. She performs this identity explicitly enough that it is immediately clear to Dodge that this child is her son.

William Dodge then perceives another subjective change in Isa as her husband approaches. Significantly, the expression in Isa's eyes suggests not only a shift in subjectivity, but a loss of freedom and sanity, so that her new mode of subjectivity is compared to a "strait waistcoat" – an archaic name for what is now commonly called a straitjacket. Isa's reaction suggests not merely that she is shifting roles to one more appropriate to a wife, as she has shifted to a maternal role, but also that the relationship is not a happy one, and it may indicate that part of the reason she is not participating in the gossip with the other members of the audience has something to do with her alienation from her marriage. As Dodge observes Giles, he considers another motivation for this shift in Isa's behaviour: "Only at Giles he looked; and looked and looked. Of whom was he thinking as he stood with his face turned? Not of Isa. Of Mrs Manresa?" (95-6). Though Giles's eye-line is unclear to Dodge, the theory that Giles is watching Manresa seems probable, and given Isa's reaction, it seems equally probable that the approach of her "[h]irsute, handsome, [and] virile" husband makes the change of Isa's expression comparable to "something in the nature of a strait waistcoat" at least partially because of the fact that his gaze is not on his wife, but another woman.

When next Giles approaches, his probable infidelity prompts Isa to shift into a new mode of subjectivity that results in her further developing her relationship with Dodge. Though she has been listening to Mrs Parker "deploring to Isa in a low voice the village idiot" (99), she suddenly becomes unable to perform the role of the understanding hostess as her advancing husband forces her into the role of the jilted wife: "Isa was immobile, watching her husband. She could feel the Manresa in his wake. She could hear in the dusk in their bedroom the usual explanation. It made no difference; his infidelity – but hers did" (99-100). Thus, Isa's subjectivity binds her

inescapably in the presence of her husband as he seems to pursue another woman, whose presence is palpable and somehow follows Giles, even when Manresa is not present.

Giles then creates an additional gulf between himself and his wife when he proceeds to make it clear that he is unwilling to be a part of any group of which Dodge is a part. His response to Mrs Parker's use of the pronoun "we" to refer to the immediate group is a clear violation of the acceptable behaviour of a host to his guests, and it prompts his wife to choose between Dodge and her husband:

"*We?*" said Giles. "*We?*" He looked, once, at William. He knew not his name; but what his left hand was doing. It was a bit of luck – that he could despise him, not himself. Also Mrs Parker. But not Isa – not his wife. She had not spoken to him, not one word. Nor looked at him either.

"Surely," said Mrs Parker, looking from one to the other. "Surely we are?"

Giles then did what to Isa was his little trick; shut his lips; frowned; and took up the pose of one who bears the burden of the world's woe, making money for her to spend.  
(100)

Critics often accept Giles's apparent reason for rejecting Dodge, and insist that Dodge begins masturbating when he sees Giles advance.<sup>52</sup> But the text allows for ambiguity: "the fingers of William's left hand closed firmly, surreptitiously, as the hero approached" (99). This description allows for multiple readings. It is possible that William Dodge may be fondling himself, but he may also simply be making a fist. Though less titillating, this latter reading is as probable, for it is consistent with Dodge's insecurity around Giles, who reminds him of the children who

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<sup>52</sup> For instance, John Batchelor insists that Dodge "finds Giles Oliver [...] so stirring that he masturbates, and Giles sees that he is doing this" (138). Similarly, Michele Pridmore-Brown characterizes Dodge as the one "who rapturously masturbates" (413) on seeing Giles approach.

persecuted his homosexuality in his formative years: “At school they held me under a bucket of dirty water, Mrs Swithin; when I looked up, the world was dirty, Mrs Swithin; so I married; but my child’s not my child, Mrs Swithin. I’m a half-man, Mrs Swithin; a flickering, mind-divided little snake in the grass, Mrs Swithin; as Giles saw” (67). Given the trauma of Dodge’s past, and given what seems to be Dodge’s nervous habit of putting his hands in his pockets when he feels uncomfortably exposed,<sup>53</sup> Dodge could be putting his hand in his pocket as a nervous habit, and making a fist defensively upon seeing Giles approach. The very ambiguity around what is happening signals William Dodge’s ambiguous subject position: it is unclear whether he is acting primarily according to his sexual desires in resistance to heteronormative expectations, or is defensive and frightened of the heterosexual tyranny he has endured since childhood. In either case, William Dodge, “whose name, never remembered by any of the characters, is an indictment of identity” (Delsandro 96) – at least insofar as his subjective ambiguity fails to provide a stable “other” against which Giles could define himself – may be terrified of him, may be powerfully attracted to him, or may be both. In other words, Giles’s fixation on Dodge’s left hand is also rooted in the ambiguity around Dodge’s feelings towards Giles, which makes it difficult for Giles to act in accordance with the opposition he is relying on to define his own identity as well as his future dealings with Dodge.

This is another version of the problem Mrs Norman faces on the train to Cambridge with Jacob Flanders and Peter and Clarissa experience during their reunion: it is difficult to behave according to a relational mode of subjectivity when the identity of the other members of the

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<sup>53</sup> For example, we see a similar reaction from Dodge when Manresa comments on his penmanship in front of the Oliver family:

“Now he,” said Mrs Manresa, as if referring to the delicacy with which he did this, and imputing to [Dodge] the same skill in writing, “writes beautifully. Every letter perfectly formed.”  
Again they all looked at him. Instantly he put his hands in his pockets. (56)

assemblage is uncertain. Ultimately, because it makes sense that Giles would be more than happy to accept any reason to exclude Dodge from any “we” he is a part of, but chooses to believe the version that flatters his vanity, I am hesitant to assume that Giles is as correct as he flippantly decides himself to be. Whether Giles’s supposition about the activity inside Dodge’s pocket is accurate or not, Giles reacts as though it is correct, decisively rejecting Dodge – and Mrs Parker – through what Isa recognizes as a haughty pose. Giles’s “little trick,” which once again sets him up as a Prometheus, Christ, or Atlas figure, “who bears the burden of the world’s woe,” once again fails to arouse Isa’s sympathy. She responds, instead, by chastising his behaviour with her eyes, wordlessly but unmistakably: “‘No,’ said Isa, as plainly as words could say it. ‘I don’t admire you,’ and looked, not at his face, but at his feet. ‘Silly little boy, with blood on his boots’” (100). Given that the blood on his boots is evidence of Giles’s attempt to “escape [...] his enforced passivity [...] by stamping on a snake he finds choking on a toad it is attempting to swallow” (Briggs 386), and to adopt a more stereotypical masculine role, Isa’s dismissive appraisal is interpreted by her husband as emasculating. So much so, in fact, that he begins wondering, “Whom then did she admire?” (100). That “Giles shift[s] his feet” suggests Isa’s gaze – like Giles’s own when it is fixed upon another woman – holds interpellative power such that he is unable to ignore it altogether.

Having had enough of Giles’s simultaneous insecurity and pomposity, infidelity and jealousy, Isa responds by symbolically rejecting her role as his wife. Taking the arrival of the Reverend Streatfield as an opportunity to discard her husband in front of a spiritual patriarch with the authority to join couples in matrimony – a symbolic leaving at the altar – Isa now extends to Dodge the invitation he wished for earlier: “Like to see the greenhouse?” (101). On reaching the greenhouse, Isa “kick[s] open the greenhouse door” (101), as though violently

rejecting the world without, and then resumes their private game, using the conspicuously artificial language of the pageant to critique reality:

He saw her standing against the green glass, the fig tree, and the blue hydrangea, knife in hand.

“She spake,” Isa murmured. “And from her bosom’s snowy antre drew the gleaming blade. ‘Plunge blade!’ she said. And struck. ‘Faithless!’ she cried. Knife, too! It broke. So too my heart,” she said.[...]

“I wish the play didn’t run in my head,” she said. (102)

As Christine Froula suggests, “this melodramatic play-speech comes not from the pageant but from the ‘real’ love-hate plot that tears her asunder,” suggesting that the pageant “clears a psychic space that allows Isa to act out buried feelings for William without having to avow them” (308). The buried feelings she is expressing are more directly aimed at her husband, though: the “[k]nife, too!” is “[f]aithless,” as it will not pierce her heart and relieve her of the suffering she is experiencing, presumably as a result of her husband’s faithlessness. Nonetheless, this avowal is an invitation for Dodge to recognize Isa as a fellow sufferer, and it facilitates an intimate conversation – though not an invitation to the type of infidelity Giles may assume is underway, as “[f]rom her tone he knew she guessed, as women always guessed, everything” (102). In an inversion of the stereotypical courting process, she then gives Dodge a flower, and only now asks his name (102).

With this, the first stages of their courtship are over, and a small-scale assemblage is finally established. They are then able to proceed to speak “as if they had known each other all their lives” (102-3), which Isa attempts to explain by suggesting that “perhaps [the familiarity is] because [they]’ve never met before, and never shall again” (102-3), a theory Dodge entertains:

“The doom of sudden death hanging over us [...]. There’s no retreating and advancing [...] for us as for them” (103). While the death Dodge is referring to is primarily the death of their relationship, which both know will not survive the day, the allusions to “sudden death,” “retreating,” and “advancing” also give voice to the horrors that they know will arrive with the coming war and demonstrate their ability to utilize knowledge of their mortality to forge a relationship. In this way, Isa and Dodge utilize the Apollonian discourses offered by the pageant to bridge their individual solitudes and to establish a strong Dionysian bond, which is fortified rather than weakened by their shared knowledge that it – like all things – will not last.

Giles and Mrs Manresa also utilize the Apollonian to form an assemblage that partly results from Giles’s oppositional assemblage with Isa. The Giles/Manresa assemblage, however, remains firmly rooted in the Apollonian and never facilitates a meaningfully Dionysian connection. Its parallels with the Isa/Dodge assemblage emphasize the failings of the Giles/Manresa assemblage. Giles’s responses to his alienation, for instance, are not entirely unlike those of his wife’s. Tellingly, Isa’s kicking open the door to the greenhouse echoes Giles own repeated kicking. Giles is first shown kicking in an attempt to strike out against his inability to confront his problems: “He kicked – a flinty yellow stone, a sharp stone, edged as if cut by a savage for an arrow.[...] The first kick was Manresa (lust). The second, Dodge (perversion). The third himself (coward). And the fourth and the fifth and all the others were the same” (89). His stone kicking leads Giles to a snake “choked with a toad in its mouth” (89), which Giles finds some comfort in stomping to death: “The white canvas on his tennis shoes was bloodstained and sticky. But it was action. Action relieved him. He strode to the Barn, with blood on his shoes” (89). Whereas it is already clear that the gore on his shoes does not impress Isa, it does impress Manresa, for it confirms Giles as the hero in some sort of “Valiant Rhoderick” narrative and sets

her up as his courtly lover: “what – she looked down – had he done with his shoes?[....] Vaguely some sense that he had proved his valour for her admiration flattered her. If vague it was sweet. Taking him in tow, she felt: I am the Queen, he my hero, my sulky hero” (96). Feeling the weight of the performance he has been watching and having witnessed his wife invite another man to the greenhouse during the first intermission, Giles responds to a discussion of the play by extending the same invitation to Manresa during the second intermission, using language identical to his wife’s:

A moral. What? Giles supposed it was: Where there’s a Will there’s a Way. The words rose and pointed a finger of scorn at him. Off to Gretna Green with his girl; the deed done. Damn the consequences.

“Like to see the greenhouse?” he said abruptly, turning to Mrs Manresa.

“Love to!” she exclaimed, and rose. (133)

Though Giles seems to miss the moral of the play, he is right to recognize that it emphasizes the strength of will as a touchstone of masculinity. Because he is critical of himself for his weakness of will, he attempts to remedy this by forcing himself out of his quotidian abortiveness and pursuing an affair. It is difficult to say how successfully Giles performs the “Valiant Rhoderick” role during his dalliance with Ms. Manresa: taking her to the greenhouse is certainly bold and blatant; he does not appear elatant after, though, as the greenhouse door is “kicked open” (140), and this fact may go some way to suggest that his attempt at attaining masculinity through firmness of will does not prove a resounding success.

But whatever transpires inside the greenhouse, it does not lead to profound intimacy akin to that Isa and Giles experience. In fact, by the time Giles and Manresa part, she is paying more attention to Giles’s father, and the narrative she and Giles have been enacting is wearing thin:



But alas, sunset light was unsympathetic to her make-up; plated it looked, not deeply interfused. And [Bart Oliver] dropped her hand; and she gave him an arch roguish twinkle, as if to say – but the end of that sentence was cut short. For she turned, and Giles stepped forward; and the light breeze which the meteorologist had foretold fluttered her skirts; and she went, like a goddess, buoyant, abundant, with flower-chained captives following in her wake. (181-2)

Now finding the light less than optimal, Manresa is so quick to depart that even the thought expressed by her “roguish twinkle” is omitted. Her brevity here implies Manresa knows that if she remains even a moment longer the magical powers of her artful application of make-up will wear off and the Oliver men will find that the goddess before them is a mere mortal – an ordinary aging woman. This scene emphasizes the Apollonian roots of her relationship with Giles, for he has not only failed to establish a profound existential bond with Manresa, but he has even failed to glimpse the real human being beneath the cosmetic deity.

Of course, the most violently oppositional assemblage depicted in the novel operates on the international scale. As Julie Vandivere suggests, “[i]n *Between the Acts*, war is hardly mentioned. Yet awareness of the conflict permeates the novel” (230). Part of the reason Giles is so caustic throughout the day is because he knows his local community to be part of a country with political alliances that ensure it will soon join the war already all but underway on the continent. Though he lacks the ability to express it, Giles feels “rage with old fogies who [sit] and [look] at views over coffee and cream when the whole of Europe – over there – [is] bristling like [...]. Only the ineffective word ‘hedgehog’ illustrate[s] his vision of Europe, bristling with guns, poised with planes” (49). It is partly the indecency of enjoying themselves so conspicuously while the rest of the European community prepares for war that bothers Giles. In

the words of Louise Poresky, “Giles objects to but participates in humankind’s pretense of civilization, for it denies the innate bestiality of human life. Civilized people’s attempt to insulate themselves from bestiality enrages Giles yet he cannot reconcile the two” (248). In this context, the implication is that Hitler’s increasing aggression and the ongoing armament of mainland Europe should act as an interpellation, for those present at the pageant are not merely subjects of Britain, but also subjects of Europe.<sup>54</sup> Even Lucy – regarded, not entirely unfairly, by her brother as one who has a tendency towards “[s]kim[ing] the surface [... while] ignor[ing] the battle in the mud” (183) – finds herself contemplating war while looking at what is floating upon the pond: “Now the jagged leaf at the corner suggested, by its contours, Europe. There were other leaves. She fluttered her eye over the surface, naming leaves India, Africa, America. Islands of security, glossy and thick” (184). As Bertrand Russell points out in the epigraph to this chapter, the danger of war can increase social cohesion at a national level, so it is perhaps not surprising that the leaves Lucy sees as standing in for the nations of the world would seem to be “islands of security” and would appear “glossy and thick.” Lucy recognizes not only that all of Europe is in some sense a single leaf, but also that all of the leaves float on the same pond and are, as a consequence, not as independent as they may seem.

But rather than focusing exclusively on the macroscopic, the end of *Between the Acts* parallels the novel’s smallest- and largest-scale oppositional assemblages by comparing Giles and Isa’s marriage to European conflict. However exhausted Isa may be with the conventionalities that bind her, the conventionality of her marriage *and* her opposition to her husband ultimately lead to assembly: “Left alone together for the first time that day, they were silent. Alone, enmity was bared; also love. Before they slept, they must fight; after they had

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<sup>54</sup> Zwerdling (323) and Froula (290-2) make similar points.

fought, they would embrace. From that embrace another life might be born. But first they must fight, as the dog fox fights with the vixen, in the heart of darkness, in the fields of night” (197). While initially they maintain their silence, their shared solitude will prompt discussion, which will take a predictable path to a predetermined conclusion. The novel’s final line, “Then the curtain rose. They spoke” (197), hardly suggests that Isa and Giles have found a way to escape convention; on the contrary, it seems to imply that the most thoroughly rehearsed part of the performance is just about to begin. But the title of the novel parallels activities on several scales, suggesting “that the ‘real’ performance takes place off-stage” and that one of the ‘acts’ that will follow the novel’s conclusion is WWII (Briggs 386), so that Giles and Isa’s opposition mirrors that between the Axis and Allies. But while marital conflict may lead to a new life, a repeat performance of global conflict can only lead to death. And though the description of Giles and Isa as dog and vixen debases their conflict by rendering it bestial, this treatment also naturalizes it. Woolf’s allusion to Conrad’s novel gestures towards a definition of civilization – albeit a Eurocentric and racially biased one – while setting up enmity and love as emerging from a scene ostensibly prior to civilized life, and perhaps fostering civilization by producing new life.

The point is not merely that the small-scale is preferable to the large-, but that large-scale oppositional assemblages pose a direct threat to the preferable small-scale assemblages, while “emphasiz[ing] the possibility that war will destroy this (admittedly minor, but nevertheless cherished) seat of civilization” (Detloff 42). It is suggestive that Giles feels as though “[a]t any moment guns would rake that land into furrows; planes splinter Bolney Minster into smithereens and blast the Folly. He, too, loved the view” (49). This implies his mood throughout the novel is also partly because he knows European war has the ability to eliminate his community and fix the subjectivity of those around him as primarily nationalist, for if airplanes were to open fire on

the crowd, there would be no way to deny their participation in the conflict, just as the torpedo fired in *Jacob's Room* cannot simply be ignored like a wave from an unsavoury former friend.

This conflation of several scales as “civilization” may go some way toward explaining the scatological opening paragraph of the novel: “It was a summer’s night and they were talking, in the big room with the windows open to the garden, about the cesspool. The county council had promised to bring water to the village, but they hadn’t” (3). As Kathy Phillips has argued, “when the characters at the beginning of *Between the Acts* lament a broken promise to bring water to the village, they imply a wider social waste land. ‘Cesspool’ becomes a rude metaphor for everything the characters call civilization” (200; see also Zwerdling 315). Clearly, this metaphor presents the work involved with maintaining civilization in anything but an idealized light. It is also worth noting, though, that the unpleasant but locally beneficial task of installing a cesspool is complicated by the fact that “the site they had chosen for the cesspool [is ...] on the Roman Road” (3), so that the work of preserving civilization is represented primarily in local terms and is shown to be in conflict with Britain’s national and Europe’s martial history.

The threat posed to the small- by the large-scale are compared in the novel’s final lines as the novel asks on which scale “civilization” more meaningfully resides. That *Between the Acts* ends with speech calls back to *Mrs Dalloway* and the potential of communication as a tool for creating Apollonian structures that alone seem to make it possible to truly survive the horrors of war in Woolf’s earlier novels: if speech is impossible or irrelevant in confrontations with the master gunner in *Jacob's Room* and ignored by the institutional powers represented by Bradshaw in *Mrs Dalloway*, perhaps the small-scale, domestic, and private space of the home in *Between the Acts* can provide an avenue – if a fraught one – to meaningful shared experience.

## Section Three – George Orwell

### Introduction

For Orwell, as for Woolf, civilization is grounded in the attempt to generate relationships to meet the profound psychic need to mediate the horrors of individual isolation; in fact, George Orwell often shares Woolf's mistrust of macro-scale assemblages as an obstacle and threat to the more meaningful interpersonal connections of small-scale relationships. But whereas Woolf's novels are more concerned with the *ontological status* of assemblages on numerous scales and on the *multivalent subjectivity* and *multiplicity* required to navigate such complex group membership, Orwell's novels are more concerned with the *coding* of assemblages and the discrepancies in *spatiotemporal scale* that are used to destroy the relational indeterminacy that allows subjects to form the assemblages they need to give their lives meaning. As a consequence, while Woolf's novels are concerned with the interrelationship between multiple historical registers and the effects of memory, shared memory, collective memory, and history on how subjects experience and navigate assemblages, Orwell is more concerned with the tension between small- and large-scale spatiotemporal registers and the effects these have on the types of relationships one is able to form.

John Flory, the protagonist in Orwell's first novel, *Burmese Days* (1934),<sup>55</sup> struggles with a lifetime of complicity with British imperialism. The novel is not primarily focused on the broad consequences of systemic exploitation, but on the problem imperialism poses to Flory's desire to forge a personally meaningful life. *Burmese Days* is concerned both with group ontology, which is central to the novel's treatment of colonialism (the rule and exploitation of locals by a group of British outsiders), and with the discursive coding of assemblages, which is the primary basis of

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<sup>55</sup> The publication of *Burmese Days* was preceded by the memoir, *Down and Out in Paris and London* (1933).

the novel's treatment of imperialism (the broader worldview and economic system that contains the discursive foundation of colonial exploitation).<sup>56</sup> While Flory has learned enough from his experiences to reject imperialism, he cannot bring himself to leave colonial Burma, and his personal anti-imperialism generates more strident imperialism from the other members of Kyauktada's European Club. Group membership and coding are both to blame for Flory's desperate situation and eventual suicide: Flory's profession as a timber merchant in Burma has only given him access to people who are either being systematically exploited and oppressed by him and his home state (with the end result that they lack the power to enter a relationship with Flory as equals), or to people who have become so corrupted by their own colonial duties that they are unwilling to engage Flory as he attempts to critique the hypocrisy at the heart of imperialism (with the end result that he must mask his true opinions around them). The arrival of a newcomer, Elizabeth Lackersteen, offers hope that Flory will be able to generate a new form of subjectivity in a relationship with someone who is not habituated to the casual racism of Club banter or the perpetual mistreatment of locals. When this hope is predictably dashed – for Elizabeth's memories of poverty continually push her to embrace a social order that puts her in a

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<sup>56</sup> "Imperialism" and "colonialism" are frequently conflated in Orwell scholarship, and are obviously contested. The important thing for this study is that I have a way to distinguish between the two branches of Deleuze's double articulation – namely, territorialization and coding (that is, the components of assemblages and the discourses that govern membership in them). To this end, I will draw on Edward Said's definition: "'imperialism' means the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan center ruling a distant territory; 'colonialism,' which is almost always a consequence of imperialism, is the implanting of settlements on distant territory" (9). The difficulty, of course, is that there is overlap in the terms as Said defines them, as "the implanting of settlements" (i.e., colonialism) is often part of "the practice [...] of a dominating metropolitan centre ruling a distant territory" (i.e., imperialism). Thus, "colonialism" is but one of the practices of imperialism, which is the broader network of power/knowledge. Nonetheless, it remains a useful distinction because the term "colonialism" is more restricted, and can be used to refer to processes of territorialization, the presence of physical bodies in space. I will, hence, align the term "colonialism" roughly with "territorialization" and "group ontology" to refer to the physical presence of foreigners who are establishing and running a colony; I will use the term "imperialism" more broadly, and as my interest in *Burmese Days* does not furnish a broader analysis of the entire imperialist socioeconomic model, I will usually be using the term in connection with "ideology," "coding," and "discourse" so as to be able to distinguish imperialism's structures of knowledge and worldviews from the imperialist practice of colonialism.

privileged position – Flory commits suicide, feeling the full extent of his own corruption and the weight of his isolation.

In Orwell's documentary about his experiences fighting in the Spanish Civil War, *Homage to Catalonia* (1938), macro-scale political machinations are shown to defeat an attempt to generate meaningful community on a scale larger than interpersonal assemblage. The text analyzes the revolution that began the war in terms of group ontology to explain the individual actions that led to the emergence of paramilitary units on a sufficiently large scale to take and hold control of Barcelona. The scapegoating of the POUM,<sup>57</sup> Orwell's militia, is undertaken by a media campaign that manipulates public discourse by proceeding toward absurd statements too incrementally to be seen as manipulative by those who are concerned with the daily business of winning a war. Orwell is here examining the relationship between spatial and temporal scale, so that his critique of inter-party polemics draws attention to the fact that martial and political institutions are able to influence individuals by undertaking plans that unfold too gradually to be noticed by an insufficiently vigilant public. Likewise, the debasement of the large-scale purpose of the war and the socialist project more broadly – the liberation of humanity from an exploitative political and economic model – is undertaken by a political seizure of the liberties gained in the first moments of the Spanish revolution. When the Spanish Government's alliance with the Soviet Union sees Orwell hunted down as a criminal because of his POUM affiliation, he turns his activities to the small-scale as his marriage provides him with a way to survive

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<sup>57</sup> The POUM (*Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista*, or the Marxist Unification Workers' Party) was a communist militia that resulted from the alliance of the Communist Party's Left and Right Oppositions: the Communist Left of Spain (*Izquierda Comunista de España*), which was explicitly Trotskyist, and the Workers and Peasants Bloc (*Bloque Obrero y Campesino*). Though this merger went against Trotsky's wishes and led him to disown the POUM, the POUM was nonetheless viewed as heavily influenced by the Trotskyism of its co-founder, Andreu Nin (Andrés Nin Pérez). Nin publicly held to Trotsky's permanent revolution thesis, in opposition to the Stalinist position that certain civil liberties must be temporarily repressed to ensure the success of Communism, and was therefore drawn into Stalin's broader purge of Trotskyism.

communist counter-revolutionary activities, only to return to multivalent subjectivity on reaching England. This final, complex subjectivity comes with obligations both to his scapegoated POUM comrades and his countrymen, who remain in the dark with regard to the true nature of the threat posed by European war. Orwell's documentary is, thus, an attempt to act as a responsible member of multiple groups by using his own memories to counter the emerging collective memory of the war before it becomes the accepted historical account and further shapes history.

Likewise, in Orwell's final novel, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949), INGSOC – a socialist totalitarian government often referred to simply as “the Party” – is attempting to deactivate the threat posed by indeterminate relations and subjectivity. The government is doing this at the level of group ontology by strictly conscribing all interpersonal relationships, at the level of discourse by ensuring that all conversations are consistent with Party values, and by creating a new language, Newspeak, with the goal of setting fixed limits on what one is able to think and speak. In this way, it is neutralizing the threat of the sort of political uprising that brought it to power by predetermining the types of interactions that are possible. In the process, it is also fixing subject-positions by imposing strict limits on the relationality that defines them. The state of Oceania demands that all Party members love Big Brother, Oceania's figurehead ruler, to the exclusion of all other love, so that the only possible meaningful interpersonal relationship is also direct and unquestioning subjectivity to Oceania's macroscopic political system, governed by the Party's abstract and contradictory doctrines. As Orwell did following his participation in the Spanish Civil War, his protagonist, Winston Smith, here attempts to use his personal memories of what life was like before the war to counter the official but false accounts of Oceanic life that are published and continually revised by the government. By attempting to forge interpersonal



connections, Winston is trying to foster an honest system of collective memory on the interpersonal scale as a way to challenge Party power.

### Isolation and the Attempted Founding of a New Community in *Burmese Days*

I leave Sisyphus at the foot of the mountain! One always finds one's burden again. But Sisyphus teaches the higher fidelity that negates the gods and raises rocks. He, too, concludes that all is well. This universe henceforth without a master seems to him neither sterile nor futile. Each atom of that stone, each mineral flake of that night-filled mountain, in itself forms a world. The struggle itself towards the heights is enough to fill a man's heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy. (Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus* 119)

Whereas Woolf's final novel, *Between the Acts*, presents an English community that may be bombed into extinction at any moment, Orwell's *Burmese Days* centres on the community of Kyauktada, a backwater hub of English colonialism, the isolation of which allows a belief in imperialism so strong that it was even then anachronistic. When not at camp making a living by exploiting Burmese natural resources, Orwell's protagonist, an English timber merchant named John Flory, spends much of his time either at the European Club or visiting his only friend, the Indian-born Dr Veraswami – who, as “Civil Surgeon and Superintendent of the jail” (10), is one of the highest ranking non-European officials in Kyauktada – to complain about “the lie that we're here to uplift our poor black brothers instead of to rob them” (37).

Flory's participation in the racist activities of the Club and his broader participation in colonialism are at odds with his apparent disdain for both, and throughout *Burmese Days*, he is torn between his obligations as a friend of Dr Veraswami and the attitudes expected of an active colonial. As Anthony Stewart suggests, Flory's inability to choose sides makes him vulnerable to the machinations of U Po Kyin, a high-ranking Burmese magistrate. Po Kyin comes to the conclusion that, because Veraswami gains so much prestige from his relationship to Flory, the only way to defeat Veraswami is to ruin the Englishman. In light of the ultimately successful assault by Po Kyin, Stewart argues that only “an all-out adherence [to pukka sahib values] could

have protected [Flory], unless he had adopted a truly independent position from the start, in which he would have rejected these rules as a matter of course” (54). Stewart argues that Flory’s simultaneous rejection of and participation in the activities of the European colonials – for having been too long in Burma, Flory is unable to imagine another life for himself elsewhere – result in his marginalization, for “[b]y not completely committing himself to the rules of the pukka sahib but still being beholden to the prevailing social and racial rules instead of carving out some independent place for himself, Flory accentuates his own vulnerability” (Stewart 56).

That said, Flory’s actions and activities as a member of *multiple* and often *mutually exclusive* relationships cannot be understood according to these two possibilities alone. Whereas continued participation in the existing European community is not a viable long-term option for Flory, neither is solitude, and what Stewart considers a binary choice is, in Orwell’s narrative, a problem without a satisfactory solution, for Flory’s habits and memories of his past – and ongoing – misdeeds on behalf of English colonialism lead to a discursive myopia that makes it impossible to imagine a life for himself away from Burma. Significantly, many of the actions that prove to be Flory’s fatal errors stem from his attempts to resolve the dilemma of the resistant colonial in one of two ways: either by creating new assemblages, collections of individuals independent of Club culture, or by shifting its discourses to make the Club more respectful of the Burmese people and customs. Though Flory is not a U Po Kyin-calibre strategist and his aims are both ill-defined and unevenly pursued, his attempts speak to a more complicated territory than is implied by Stewart’s two options.

The reason Flory neither embraces nor rejects the colonial community absolutely is a conflict between the public and personal registers according to which he views his identity. While the protagonist is broadly critical of colonialism – as, for that matter, is *Burmese Days* as a

whole – those criticisms are complicated by Flory’s desperate attempts to overcome loneliness. It is true that “what really occupies [the novel’s] center is the personal relationship of Flory and Elizabeth” (Eagleton 17); however, this relationship is not merely a romance, but one of Flory’s several attempts at assembling those Flory views as his allies so that “the theme of *Burmese Days* [...] is not anticolonialism, but the failure of community – of two persons and of society” (Lee 19). This failure of community is multivalent so that it connects the personal with a broader anti-colonial register, and the novel’s critique of imperialism is bottom-up in at least two senses: first, the protagonist’s estrangement from the colonial project is rooted in the failure of his community to tolerate and sustain ideological flexibility and diversity – a problem manifested in a specific community, but one that leads to the individual’s alienation from the broader political system that produces such communities; and second, the novel does not offer a sustained philosophically-grounded critique of colonialism, but instead utilizes the narrative of personal alienation to gesture towards the systemic oppression of colonialism and the communal sterility that results from the opacity and superficiality of imperialist discourse. Though he can see the problems posed by his life and the activities of his fellow colonials, his inability to see a way to leave Burma means that Flory ultimately remains complicit in colonialism throughout the novel, so that *Burmese Days* “is a story without heroes” (Ingle 231). The narrative thus places the personal and the social into a dialectical relationship such that the personal is only of interest because of its implications for the social, but the social is examined only partially as the public stakes of colonialism are viewed through a personal lens.

To further illuminate the implications of Flory’s attempts to navigate multiple relationships that make a variety of different claims on his loyalty, this chapter will analyze the points of overlap and conflict between several of the different social assemblages presented in

*Burmese Days*. I will begin by considering the problematic world we are shown at the beginning of the novel, first in terms of the existential crises Flory experiences as a result of his past participation in colonialism, then in terms of the ossified discourses present in both the European Club and in Flory's friendship with Veraswami. I will then move to an analysis of Flory's attempt to escape the bind created by friendship and Club membership by fostering a romance with the newly arrived Elizabeth Lackersteen. This analysis necessitates considering Flory's and Elizabeth's places in a variety of groups, for their romance is ultimately undermined by the social contexts within which they act: in Elizabeth's case, her past experiences in England and Paris, her relationship with her aunt and uncle in Burma, her understanding of the appropriate embodiment of English masculinity, and her impressions of the purpose of the European Club; in Flory's, his Club membership, his friendship with Veraswami, and his sexual relationship with Ma Hla May. Finally, I will consider Flory's suicide in terms of his failure to generate a small-scale alternative to the Club that would allow him to live a more ethical and harmonious life in Burma. In this way, I will put forward a reading of the novel that focuses on the psychic desperation underpinning Flory's attempts to navigate multiple inadequate assemblages as he seeks a way either to make them adequate, or to establish a satisfactory alternative. In either case, the desire to foster new assemblages or change the predominant discourses is an attempt to revise his own subjectivity by, as DeLanda might term it, changing either of the parameters that define both assemblage and subjectivity: changing discourses to change the coding of an assemblage (what discourses govern group membership), or changing territorialization (who the group members are).

### The Club and its Failed Alternatives

The European Club is “the real centre of the town” (17), both ontologically and epistemologically, and Orwell emphasizes the impossibility of living a life independent of its effects. Though it is nothing more than “a dumpy one-storey wooden building,” the Club is “the real seat of the British power, the Nirvana for which native officials and millionaires pine in vain. It was doubly so in this case, for it was the proud boast of Kyauktada Club that, almost alone of Clubs in Burma, it had never admitted an Oriental to membership” (17). For this reason, the Club represents the centre of colonial power and the unattainable goal of even the most successful of the Indigenous Burmese.

As a “spiritual citadel” set up as part church, part fortified defensive structure (17), it daily protects the Europeans from contact with the people they are systematically exploiting and oppressing, and for whom the possibility of entering the Club is a feat just short of achieving a state of Nirvana – theoretically possible, but unlikely to occur soon in any particular case. Ralph Crane’s reading of the Club as “a metaphorical island” (23) emphasizes that, as Michael Carter puts it, “[a] tiny minority of outsiders, having established absolute dominance, are resisting the intrusion of any representative of the great subjugated majority of natives” (54). While the members of this citadel are keen to exclude the locals from membership in the Club, it is their labour that makes the Club possible. The interior of the Club highlights the ideal invisibility of systematic colonialist exploitation. This is signalled by the club’s *punkah* – a large ceiling fan attached to a rope leading out of the club – which is first mentioned as “lazily flapping, sh[aking] dust into the tepid air” (19). Orwell reveals the engine powering the *punkah* only when its operation is disrupted: “The invisible *chokra* who pulled the punkah rope outside was falling asleep in the glare. / ‘Butler!’ yelled Ellis, [...] ‘go and wake that bloody *chokra* up!’” (25). As

well as a poignant example of the heartlessness that enables Club life, the discursive place of the child passing out in the heat represents the status of the Burmese more generally, for he has significance only in relation to the Club; his suffering is not considered until it causes the Europeans to suffer, and then only as a case of lax discipline.

The novel's inciting incident emphasizes the extent to which Club discourse is dependent on racist ideals that are enforced by Club members. Macgregor's posting of a notice – "It has been suggested that as there are as yet no Oriental members of this club, and as it is now usual to admit officials of gazetted rank, whether native or European, to membership of most European Clubs, we should consider following this practice in Kyauktada" (21) – threatens the Club's insularity in the name of token inclusivity. Ellis, the Club's most outspoken racist, responds with a particularly vitriolic tirade in an attempt to protect its segregation:

He's asking us to break all our rules and take a dear little nigger-boy into this Club. *Dear* Dr Veraswami, for instance. Dr Very-slimy, I call him. That *would* be a treat, wouldn't it? Little pot-bellied niggers breathing garlic in your face over the bridge-table. Christ, to think of it! We've got to hang together and put our foot down on this at once. What do you say, Westfield? Flory? (22)

Though it does not combine well with the imagery of his "hang together" metaphor, Ellis's insistence that they put their collective "foot down on this at once" emphasizes his desire for firm and decisive action. That this concatenation of racist stereotypes and mixed metaphors is focused on one individual is not an accident, for as the highest ranking non-white official in the district and a friend of Flory's, Dr Veraswami is the candidate most likely to be proposed by a Club member. Ellis's call to action ends with a formal interpellation as Westfield and Flory are asked what they think – a question that really only invites agreement. When Westfield responds that he

supposes they have “[g]ot to put up with it” because “B—s of natives are getting into all the Clubs nowadays” (22), Ellis refutes his logic by emphasising a willingness to defend their right to remain as they are, even if they are the only ones. As he puts it, “I’ll die in a ditch before I’ll see a nigger in here” (22). He then attempts to shame Macgregor for writing the notice in the first place by marking “a tiny, neat ‘B.F.’ against Mr Macgregor’s signature” (22), making his own judgement clear before asking Flory, again, what he thinks. Though Flory does not respond, their eyes meet and Ellis responds immediately with an assault: “My God, I should have thought in a case like this [...] you’d have the decency to back me up. Even if that pot-bellied greasy little sod of a nigger doctor *is* your best pal” (22-3). In this way, Ellis marks what he sees as the acceptable limits of Flory’s relationships with Burma’s non-white population. Though he insists he is indifferent to Flory’s friendship with Dr Veraswami,<sup>58</sup> he conspicuously places Flory’s relationships in a hierarchy of acceptable colonial relationships, with friendship being unimportant compared to maintaining racial segregation.

Though Ellis’s views are expressed in a louder and more unapologetically racist way than the other characters’, they differ only in degree and are ultimately shown to be consistent with an imperial discourse that is equally dangerous and ossified – one as automatic and rehearsed as the exchanges between Lucy and Bart in *Between the Acts*. Ellis’s oft-repeated insistence that they have “got to hang together” (e.g. 30), Westfield’s despair over “Lost Dominion and all that” (28) and frequent focus on “[t]he ruin of the Indian Empire through too much legality” (31), and Macgregor’s stated lack of “prejudice against Orientals [...] [p]rovided they were given no freedom” (29), represent a series of phrases that are invoked too often in the Club to mean

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<sup>58</sup> In his words, “Do what you like outside the Club. But, by God, it’s a different matter when you talk of bringing niggers in here” (23).



anything. The only information such statements transmit is that the interlocutors support the status quo and hold the views they ought to.

Accordingly, the repetition of Club discourse is an attempt to interpellate Flory, who, as Westfield notes when Flory leaves, says “some bolshie things sometimes” (32), and whom Ellis characterizes as “a bit *too* bolshie for [his] taste” (32). The quotidian racism of Club banter succeeds at making Flory’s outsider status clear to him, but while he despises it too much to participate in it, the racist banter does not entice Flory to try to respond in a way that would assert his insider status. Instead, he maintains silent compliance before feeling the burden of his outsider status as desperation to escape: “Flory pushed back his chair and stood up.[...] Was it possible that they could go on week after week [...] repeating word for word the same evil-minded drivel, like a parody of a fifth-rate story in *Blackwood’s*? Would none of them *ever* think of anything new to say?” (31-2). Flory does not actually say any of this. He states merely, “I’m afraid I shall have to be off [...]. I’ve got some things to see to before breakfast, unfortunately,” and he is even “at some pains not to show [his feelings] in his face” (32). However, the focalized narration that concludes Flory’s thoughts – “Oh, what a place, what people! What a civilization is ours [...].! God have mercy on us, for all of us are part of it” (32) – is not restricted to those actually present, but also includes the novel’s readers, as Orwell draws attention to the wider society responsible for the continuation of colonial practices and imperialist discourses. Significantly, while the “evil-minded drivel” is shown to be problematic in itself, what Flory is unable to tolerate at this particular moment is the drivel’s incessant repetition. Such conversations are a way of strengthening group membership by reiterating Club orthodoxy, and Ellis uses his remarks to elicit negative as well as positive responses: they are a deliberate challenge to Flory in the form of an invitation to utter some of the “bolshie” things he believes,

and an attempt to use Flory's otherness to raise safely muttered platitudes to the level of aggressively recited catechisms. Flory's "abject moral cowardice" (Lieskounig 63), is thus layered by his attempts to opt out of a group dynamic predicated upon his attempt to opt out. It is a situation in which his difference is a challenge to the other members to display their own orthodoxy, and it functions in such a way whether or not Flory participates in futile arguments with predetermined outcomes. Quotidian Club banter operates not by converting those with "bolshie" views to colonial dogma, but rather by repeating the same facile orthodoxies so frequently that it becomes pointless to engage the Club members in conversation on controversial subjects. In other words, Club members behave more like the bleating sheep in *Animal Farm*, which drown out and exhaust their opposition, than O'Brien in Room 101, who demands ideological conversion.

Yet, what results from Flory's choice not to participate is a profound and dangerous form of isolation that Flory does not ultimately survive. Though the English colonials are able to act in ways that would be unthinkable in England, the prescriptive and pervasive nature of imperial discourse prevents the formation of complex relationships by making it impossible to communicate any thoughts that do not happen to align with Club dogma: "[F]riendship can hardly exist when every white man is a cog in the wheels of despotism. Free speech is unthinkable.[...] You are free to be a drunkard, an idler, a coward, a backbiter, a fornicator; but you are not free to think for yourself. Your opinion on every subject of any conceivable importance is dictated for you by the pukka sahibs' code" (66). The "pukka sahibs"<sup>59</sup> code" is, therefore, not overcoded in a Deleuzian sense, as it is a system that allows all matter of activities that social codes would forbid in England. But it codes Club membership in a way that takes for

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<sup>59</sup> *Pukka Sahib* translates roughly as "absolute master" and was a term of respect applied to colonials.

granted that its participants are intrinsically identified by their membership, whereas membership in an assemblage is governed by relationships that are treated as external (by Deleuze) or extrinsic (by DeLanda). As in *Jacob's Room*, where participation in WWI eliminates the relationships that make other forms of subjectivity possible, when Club members are interpellated in *Burmese Days*, it is taken for granted that they will act in accordance with their membership in this organization, so that when it does apply, the “pukka sahibs’ code” cannot be contradicted.

The novel shows Flory having tried his hand at all of the aforementioned outrages, but still “the secrecy of [his] revolt poisons [him] like a secret disease” (66) because “it is a corrupting thing to live one’s real life in secret” (67). His colonial location places Flory in a deadly bind in which he is doubly isolated as “a genuine exile from his homeland” (Carter 67), but is also “*in* the Club, but not *of* the Club,[...] trapped ambiguously in a contradiction between action and professed belief” (Carter 57). In the past, Flory has left this contradiction untreated while attempting to remedy his feelings of loneliness, resulting in long-standing relationships that only exacerbate the contradiction between action and belief. Hence, Orwell’s protagonist is living the consequences of his previous attempts to resolve or cope with the destructive isolation that results from his continued colonial role in Burma by generating assemblages he believes will not be governed by Club discourse, but which are shown to be as shaped by colonialism as are the activities in the Club.

Flory’s friendship with Veraswami is one such attempt to cope with isolation, and that it is centred on “some cultured conversation” (35) suggests it is meant to relieve the alienation caused by Club banter. This relationship is presented as “a topsy-turvy affair, for the Englishman was bitterly anti-English and the Indian fanatically loyal” (38) and is frequently characterized by

novel and critics alike according to Flory and Veraswami's "inverted rôles" (Hollis 30, for example), though such descriptions understate the political context in which their conversations take place. For Flory, the attraction is that Veraswami provides an opportunity to say what he will not say in the Club. The friendship provides him with "a safety-valve" and "a little Black Mass on the sly" (41). Though Veraswami describes Flory's opinions as "seditious opinions that are worthy of the *Burmese Patriot*" (37), he seems to enjoy these encounters as much as Flory: "Flory's seditious opinions shocked him, but they gave him a certain shuddering pleasure, such as a pious believer will take in hearing the Lord's Prayer repeated backwards" (38). Defending colonial dogma may be a way for Veraswami, as the beneficiary of a western education, to "argu[e] for white mastery in order to realize himself as a superior inferior" (Carter 60). But though these interactions take place in private, they do not take place in a vacuum, and it would be dangerous for Veraswami to adopt a position that Flory can, because of his race, spout freely and liberally. His reference to *Burmese Patriot* alludes to the rumour that U Po Kyin has spread as part of "a concerted attack on Dr Veraswami" (10). That Veraswami shares Po Kyin's presumption that a non-white official guilty of sedition is ruined suggests a reason for the intractability of the doctor's belief in the colonial ideals he defends. It also suggests a reason for the pleasure he receives from hearing Flory speak against them. The friendship is, therefore, far from symmetrical: Flory is free to say whatever he likes to the doctor because Veraswami can do him no harm, but the inverse is not true. As Carter argues, Flory is not friends with Veraswami despite the doctor's colour, but "only because he is black," for it is Veraswami's ethnicity that makes conversations with him more tolerable than with a member of the Club (62). This imbalance is not conducive to the mutually free and open conversations that Flory is seeking. The power imbalance implicit in their relationship, a consequence of the colonial impinging on

the interpersonal, signals the fact that their friendship could not provide an alternative to the Club.

Though their dialogue seems to represent a meaningful exchange between people who disagree with one another, the narrator's parenthetical explanation of one of the doctor's interruptions makes it clear that it is as ossified as Club discourse: "The doctor [...] always interrupted the argument at this point (for as a rule it followed the same course, almost word for word)" (39). While Flory may find these predetermined discussions to be tolerable because they operate as a form of routinized confession that alleviates his guilt without actually demanding he change anything in his life (Carter 61), the interpersonal benefits are limited, for "their predictable ritualistic discourse [...] almost renders their presence to one another superfluous," and the conversations function as "an incipient form of 'duckspeak'" (Carter 61). This mode of automatic speech serves as little more than a photographic negative of what Flory finds intolerable at the Club, negating Club conversation but generating nothing new.

The emptiness of their interactions foreshadows the weakness of their relationship that becomes evident when Veraswami raises the possibility of Flory's endorsement for Club membership as a way to protect the doctor from U Po Kyin's campaign: "you do not know what prestige it gives to an Indian to be a member of the European Club. In the Club, practically he *is* a European. No calumny can touch him. A Club member is sacrosanct" (45). The narrator explains that the shift out of their usual false dialectic on Empire to the never-before broached subject of Veraswami's desire to become a member makes Flory "ashamed and uncomfortable," for it requires they both admit that, "because of his black skin, [Veraswami] could not be received in the Club" (45). The difficulty of this acknowledgement suggests the complexity and incompatibility of their different modes of subjectivity, and places the blame squarely on

colonialism, for “[i]t is a disagreeable thing when one’s close friend is not one’s social equal; but it is a thing native to the very air of India” (45). Despite the competing sets of expectations, Flory believes that his subjective obligations as Veraswami’s “close friend” *should* override his obligations as a Club member: “In common decency it was his duty to support the doctor. But he knew also that the doctor would never ask for any support, and that there would be an ugly row before an Oriental was got into the Club” (45). Certainly, this is evidence of Flory’s cowardice and worthlessness as a friend (Patai 28), but it also suggests the impossibility of a friendship not shaped by colonialism. At the same time, the fact that Veraswami *is* Flory’s closest friend emphasizes the depth of Flory’s isolation, as *Burmese Days* emphasizes the reciprocity between these registers of identity and action.

Flory’s purchase of Ma Hla May represents another past attempt to establish companionship without reference to the Club, but it further underscores the extent to which all of Flory’s relationships in Burma are necessarily predicated on the systematic colonial exploitation the Club symbolizes. Flory and Ma Hla May’s relationship reflects the general theme “of sexual and social identity and the linkage between them” (Patai 22), and is one of Orwell’s attempts to analyze “the relationship between power and sexual repression” (Hitchens 19). Yet, it also draws attention to “the effect that Imperialism had on the Europeans charged with administering it” (Newsinger 5). Flory’s decision to purchase Hla May was grounded in his roles in the colonial community, whether his original goal was to achieve sexual release, to gain power over another, to forge a relationship independent of the Club, or all of the above. Therefore, Flory’s purchase of Hla May suggests important if obscured linkages between Flory’s psychosexual state, the local implications that have resulted from acting on this state, the social atmosphere that has shaped Flory’s desires, and the means at his disposal to attempt to satisfy them.

This sexual relationship proves too destructive and too embedded in the colonial dynamic represented by the Club to alleviate Flory's loneliness by providing companionship outside of the Club's influence. As is evident from their first exchange in the novel, Flory does not have any feelings for Hla May, and he treats her as an annoying servant who oversteps her bounds:

"Why did my master not send for me this afternoon?" she said.

"I was sleeping. It is too hot for that kind of thing."

"So you would rather sleep alone than with Ma Hla May? How ugly you must think me, then! Am I ugly, master?"

"Go away," he said, pushing her back. "I don't want you at this time of day." (50) Hla May likes to "boast of her position as a 'bo-kadaw' – a white man's wife," and though she has "persuaded everyone, herself included, that she [i]s Flory's legal wife" (51), there is no sign of such a relationship here, in either his tone or hers. Flory's coldness suggests her supposed *bo-kadaw* title is little more than an honorific meant to increase her prestige among the other members of the Burmese community. While Hla May claims to love Flory "more than anything in the world" and insists she has "always been faithful" (51), the narrator reveals that this is not the case: "Flory's embraces meant nothing to her (Ba Pe, Ko S'la's younger brother, was secretly her lover)" (51). Apart from the status provided by her relationship with Flory, Hla May's only other motivation seems to be money, and her visits invariably end with some sort of payment (e.g. 52). Though Flory's treatment of Hla May is almost always indefensibly cruel, his assessment of her reasons for wanting to be with him, to the extent that it is her choice – "You only like me because I am a white man and have money" (51) – does not seem to be inaccurate. The relationship is unable to provide meaningful interpersonal contact, for it "precludes

absolutely the possibility of the I-Thou. Her only value is that of flesh, and his only value is the colour of his flesh and what that entails socio-economically” (Carter 62).

The text first suggests existentialist absurdity<sup>60</sup> and begins to foreshadow Flory’s suicide by relating his colonial role and his relationship with Hla May to his precarious psychological state. Alone after having had sex with and paid Hla May, Flory is worried about his state of mind: “In the dark evening, after a quite idle day, one’s ennui reaches a pitch that is frantic, suicidal. Work, prayer, books, drinking, talking – they are all powerless against it” (53). Flory’s memory of other “frantic, suicidal” states following Hla May’s departures would seem an odd form of “ennui,” and seems to suggest instead “guilt at his sexual exploitation of Ma Hla May” (Newsinger 7). However, this exploitation has become so routine that Hla May is shown to be merely another version of the *chokra* who falls asleep pulling the punkah rope, and it is this fact makes ennui not just more probable but also more disturbing. Flory’s quotidian exploitation of the woman, enabled by his status as a white man, makes what should be shocking merely banal, commonplace to the extent that he is no longer haunted by guilt; if anything, he is haunted by guilt for his lack of guilt. His inactivity thus leads to a “frantic, suicidal” state because it provides Flory with the unwelcome opportunity to contemplate both the emptiness of his life and the systematic mistreatment and degradation of Ma Hla May and the rest of the Burmese community that facilitates this empty existence.

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<sup>60</sup> In this context, “absurdity” is a term used in this chapter in its philosophical sense, as denoting “the modern sense of human purposelessness in a universe without meaning or value” (Baldick 1), in the face of which Camus argues, “[t]here is but one truly serious philosophical problem, and that is suicide” (1). At the same time, Flory’s relationship with Ma Hla May is surely absurd in a way that is consistent in the everyday usage of the word:

“It’s absurd” means “It’s impossible” but also: “it’s contradictory.” If I see a man armed only with a sword attack a group of machineguns, I shall consider his act to be absurd. But it is solely by virtue of the disproportion between his intentions and the reality he will encounter, of the contradiction I notice between his true strength and the aim he has in view. (Camus 28)

In this sense, Flory’s relationship with Ma Hla May is absurd, for he has pursued it despite the fact that it has no ability to provide the type of relationship he needs, and does not now seem to be able or willing to escape it.



The horror he feels at his alienation from both genuine human connection and possible alternatives to that alienation is emphasized when Flory, desperate to avoid this “frantic, suicidal” state, takes his dog, Flo, for a swim in the jungle. Facing the beauty of the jungle, Flory’s isolation becomes palpable: “Alone, alone, the bitterness of being alone! So often like this, in lonely places in the forest, he would come upon something – bird, flower, tree – beautiful beyond all words, if there had been a soul with whom to share it. Beauty is meaningless until it is shared” (55). Flory is on the verge of a Dionysian experience, for his appreciation of the profound beauty of the scene leads to an experience of not only loneliness, but meaninglessness. This sheds some light on Flory’s past suicidal states, for he is approaching a recognition of his own absurdity. But while Flory recognizes the meaninglessness of his own experiences in the face of his isolation, he sees the cause for this as resting in his particular social situation: the scene he is encountering is meaningless *because* he has nobody to share it with, not necessarily because life is intrinsically devoid of meaning, and the meaninglessness itself is confined to “beauty” unshared rather than to life in general. Hence, Flory’s feelings of absurdity are the cause of Flory’s attempts at assemblage: if he wants to feel like his life has meaning, he will have to generate relationships within which meaningful conversation is possible.

At this point in the novel, whether the ridiculousness of Flory’s situation has the potential to turn into absurdity in the sense that “it passes judgement on the universe” (Camus 27) is uncertain, though we have some reason to suspect that the scenes of Flory’s “frantic, suicidal” evenings could lead to the dangerous form of absurdity Camus is interested in. Given Flory’s hatred of his role in propping up the colonial powers, his unwillingness to leave this role, and the absence of any proof that would suggest he could be a happy Sisyphus when in the service of an

imperial power, Orwell signals at this early stage of the novel the threat posed by the absurd, and Flory's inability to survive an encounter with it.

### **Flory and Elizabeth**

When Elizabeth Lackersteen arrives in Kyauktada, Flory's attempt to form a romance with her is undertaken as yet another attempt to forge the type of assemblage that can give his life meaning apart from Club membership. Significantly, Elizabeth's race and nationality seem to suggest that she might be free from the colonial power dynamics that have limited the sustaining power of his relationships with Dr Veraswami and Ma Hla May. The fact that he has "never seen a woman with cropped hair before, except in illustrated papers" (78) is significant, for Flory is convinced at once that Elizabeth's different appearance reflects a difference of character. This and the fact that she is English (Carter 69) suggest that she is, at once, like enough to the rest of the colonialist community to live there with Flory, but different enough that a relationship with her would enable forms of subjectivity that are not possible within his current assemblages.

Flory begins at once to project onto Elizabeth all of the qualities that would enable a relationship with her to provide the intellectual and psychosexual sustenance his relationships with Hla May and Veraswami cannot. It is important to note, with Daphne Patai, the urbane influence Flory hopes Elizabeth will supply: "Through Elizabeth he seeks to set things right, fantasizing about the life they will have together [...]. They will be so civilized together that they will break through the material barrier of imperialism's ugliness" (42). When he learns that she has moved from Paris, he immediately imagines her "[s]itting in caf  s with foreign art students, drinking white wine and talking about Marcel Proust" (81), so that her personal history – in the guise of her vague location – lead Flory to an assumption about her taste in and knowledge about

books, with her love of modernist literature signalling her difference from the other denizens of Kyauktada, her status as an intellectual, and her progressiveness.

In spite of mounting evidence to the contrary, Flory's delusions grow into fantasies about the transformation her influence will bring about in his own subjectivity by transforming his surroundings and the types of interactions he will be able to have in them. Flory frequently contemplates the future of his drawing room, "sluttish and bachelor-like no longer, with new furniture from Rangoon, and a bowl of pink balsams like rosebuds on the table, and books and water-colours and a black piano. Above all the piano!" (258). He dwells on the piano because it is, for him, a "symbol, perhaps because he was unmusical, of civilized and settled life" (258), and because its presence somehow delivers him "for ever from the sub-life of the past decade – the debaucheries, the lies, the pain of exile and solitude, the dealings with whores and moneylenders and pukka sahibs" (258). It is hardly surprising when we learn that Elizabeth does not play the piano (263), as from the beginning, Flory chooses to believe she can provide him with the type of civilized and intellectually stimulating conversation that has been missing from the Club, or be the other half of such a relationship outside of the Club. He views his identity in strictly relational terms, so the important thing about Elizabeth is that she be the type of person he imagines capable of providing a meaningful relationship.

Though the narrator tends not to describe Flory's "frantic, suicidal" states directly, Flory attempts to explain them to Elizabeth, suggesting the need to form a relationship that will give him a reason to continue living forms the basis of the new relationship he hopes to generate. It is so important that she understand the loneliness of his existence that Flory struggles to explain his desperate psychological state before proposing to her, and thus misses his chance to propose:

Have you got some picture of the life we live here? The foreignness, the solitude, the melancholy! Foreign trees, foreign flowers, foreign landscapes, foreign faces. It's all as alien as a different planet. But do you see – and it's this that I so want you to understand – do you see, it mightn't be so bad living on a different planet, it might even be the most interesting thing imaginable, if you had even one person to share it with.[...] Does all this seem quite meaningless? (170-1)

Flory attributes his melancholy to the foreignness of the setting – though it is suggestive that he does not attempt to remedy it by moving elsewhere. The fact that his life seems “quite meaningless” is natural, though, if he is describing something that exceeds the logically expressible, and comes close to the Dionysian. From that perspective, the “[o]ne person who could see it with eyes something like your own” could turn the “solitary hell” into “a paradise” (170) just by being present because this small-scale social assemblage would play an Apollonian role in which the foreignness would gain meaning in the shared experience of it.

From their first meeting, it is, nevertheless, evident that Flory and Elizabeth have incompatible values that would make this sort of meaningful assemblage impossible. This first becomes clear when Elizabeth demonstrates her affinity with Club discourse. When Flory, believing “no one with eyes in his head could resist a *pwe*-dance” (96), asks if she would like to observe one, Elizabeth agrees because she assumes Flory, as a white Colonialist in Burma, will uphold Club propriety at all times: “Elizabeth felt very doubtful. Somehow it did not seem right or even safe to go in among that smelly native crowd. However, she trusted Flory, who presumably knew what was proper, and allowed him to lead her to the chairs” (98). The text's free indirect discourse channels Elizabeth's opinions,<sup>61</sup> as she regards the assembled audience in

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<sup>61</sup> Readings that attempt to attribute Flory's attitudes to Orwell in a simple and direct way, or to attribute the racism and sexism depicted in the novel as belonging to Orwell (e.g. Melia 14; and Patai 36-7) almost invariably fail to

explicitly bigoted terms. In contrast, Flory operates under the assumption that Elizabeth's background means she will find the *pwe* especially enjoyable: "I knew this would interest you; that's why I brought you here. You've read books and been in civilized places, you're not like the rest of us miserable savages here" (100). Flory's notable inversion of "savages" to apply, not to what Elizabeth sees as "that smelly native crowd" (98), but to the English, who are "savage" precisely because they cannot appreciate the Burmese arts, shows the ideological distance between them.

But Elizabeth despises art as much as she loathes the Burmese, and she watches the dance "with a mixture of amazement, boredom and something approaching horror" (99). The free indirect discourse, mapping Elizabeth's response to Flory's explanations, emphasizes that it is his repeated use of "art" that sparks her panic and culminates in her departure:

What *was* the man talking about? was her first thought. Moreover, she had caught the hated word Art more than once.[...] She looked round her, at the sea of dark faces and the lurid glare of the lamps; the strangeness of the scene almost frightened her. What was she doing in this place?[...] Why was she not back at the Club with the other white people? Why had he brought her here, among this horde of natives, to watch this hideous and savage spectacle? (100-1)

Her lack of perception and education, as well as her inability to follow Flory's simple expression of his appreciation of Burmese culture, are an ironic subversion of his belief that she is the ideal partner for a life of civilized conversation and piano playing. It is not her ignorance but her hatred of matters important to Flory that signals that a relationship with Elizabeth will no more

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account for the novel's use of free indirect discourse, and in particular, ignore the narrator's tendency to use overtly derogatory terms when characterizing the thoughts of bigoted characters. Throughout *Burmese Days*, this is a strategy to emphasize the extreme racism of these characters.

provide his life meaning than have those with Dr Veraswami and Ma Hla May. Elizabeth's bigoted horror of the Burmese people – described as a “horde of natives” and characterized by their scent, their sweat, and the proximity of their bodies to her own – along with her desire to be “back at the Club with the other white people,” suggest the Club atmosphere that Flory is desperate to escape is Elizabeth's ideal. Elizabeth rejects Flory's earlier inversion of “savage,” which she reapplies in line with Club discourse to the “hideous and savage spectacle” that seems to encompass the performance and its audience.

Elizabeth does not just disrupt the assembled community by leaving; she reinforces fractures caused by the ongoing history of colonialism in Burma. In the middle of the best dancer's performance, Elizabeth rises, insisting, “I'm going. It's time we were back,” and is so insistent that Flory does “not even [have] time to thank the *pwe* people for their trouble” (101). As well as annoying the members of the audience, who clear a path for their departure “with a sulky air” (101-2), their departure offends the best dancer, who had begun early to honour Elizabeth and Flory and now refuses to continue dancing. The narrator, channeling the Burmese audience members, reflects, “How like these English people, to upset everything by sending for the best dancer and then go away almost before she had started” (102).

A later passage, in which Flory takes Elizabeth to the bazaar, follows a parallel progression – from her incomprehension of another culture, to gut revulsion, to a hasty and offensive departure and ashamed locals – but provides additional insight into the couple's incompatibility by drawing attention to Elizabeth's preference for empty banter. After a mutually exasperating argument, Flory offers a banal remark – “It's getting beastly hot, isn't it?” – which Elizabeth “seize[s] on [...] with a kind of eagerness[, ...] turn[ing] to face him, and [...] smiling again” before enthusiastically responding, “Isn't it simply *baking*!” (127). That this, one of

Elizabeth's first enthusiastic responses, is to a phatic statement that, "with it the reassuring atmosphere of Club-chatter," succeeds to "soothe[] her like a charm" (127) suggests that "[t]he disconnectedness of Idle Talk is her security" (Carter 73). As his desire for frank speech is the main reason that Flory feels alienated from the Club, it is perhaps his most important need, and it is what he most hopes to gain in a romance. Elizabeth's relieved embrace of trivial chatter is conclusive evidence that their romance cannot provide Flory with real connection. Rather, marriage with Elizabeth would merely bring facile Club discourse home.

Elizabeth's history and tastes show that Flory's attempts at cultural education and cultured conversation must prove futile, and that a relationship with her has no potential to form the type of assemblage Flory needs.<sup>62</sup> Marrying her could only increase his feelings of isolation and alienation. Elizabeth, an orphan at twenty-two, has been particularly influenced by two terms at "a very expensive boarding school" during her father's brief fit of affluence following Armistice, which has provided her with "a code of living summed up in one belief, and that a simple one. It was that the Good ('lovely' was her name for it) is synonymous with the expensive, the elegant, the aristocratic; and the Bad ('beastly') is the cheap, the low, the shabby, the laborious" (86). Though Elizabeth had not attended the school for long, "for Mr

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<sup>62</sup> The past so greatly influences the modes of subjectivity presently available to both Elizabeth and Flory as to nearly suggest a historical determinism in Orwell's early fiction. It may be useful here to consider Vincent Sherry's analysis of Orwell's evolving understanding of the past, especially as it is influenced by T. S. Eliot's treatment of tradition. Sherry argues, "Orwell's intelligence about the past is empirical in the extreme; as he uncovers his characters' biographical pasts, in his later fiction, he is exploring tradition as something equally concrete, known, and felt" (87-8). Though the earliest novel Sherry treats directly is *A Clergyman's Daughter* (1935), both Orwell's empirical approach to biography and his early mistrust of tradition are signaled by *Burmese Days* (1934). The only tradition on display in *Burmese Days* is imperialist and poisonous, and it combines with Flory's biographical past to produce his "secret disease" just as surely as imperialist sensibilities combine with Elizabeth's upbringing and personal history to produce her bigotry. This early treatment of biographical history and tradition differs from Orwell's later writing not only in that the later texts are able to locate traditions more sustaining than imperialism's: that Flory's ironic fetishization of Proust throughout *Burmese Days* is echoed unironically in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* by Winston waking "with the word 'Shakespeare' on his lips" (33), for instance, signals an increased valuation of the past's potential to connect one with sustaining traditions; but it also signals, as Sherry argues, a strikingly Eliotic understanding of the broader importance of tradition in Orwell's later works.

Lackersteen's prosperity did not last" (86), the narrator insists, in a dubious generalization that removes any hope that Elizabeth might be improved by a relationship with Flory, that "[t]here is a short period in everyone's life when his character is fixed forever; with Elizabeth, it was those two terms during which she rubbed shoulders with the rich" (86). Elizabeth's poverty following her mother's death is a direct result of her mother's attempt to be an artist (88-9), so that Elizabeth's division of life into the "lovely" and the "beastly" does not extend the honour of loveliness to cultured activities, such as the arts. Thus, her experience in Paris has equipped Elizabeth with "a healthy loathing of Art. In fact, any excess of intellect – 'braininess' was her word for it – tended to belong, in her eyes, to the 'beastly'" (90).

Elizabeth's hatred of Art, intolerance of 'braininess,' and mixture of racism and xenophobia – for even in Paris Elizabeth "disliked all foreigners *en bloc*; or at least all foreign men, with their cheap-looking clothes and their revolting table manners" (89) – seem to ensure that she and Flory could never have a mutually satisfying conversation. Indeed, Elizabeth Lackersteen is a character nearly as incompatible with Flory as possible: she has nothing to offer that would make Flory's life more bearable, and she is only "glad to hear him talk" on the subjects of shooting and horses (118) – subjects about which he is less than enthusiastic. Tellingly, during their first meeting, Elizabeth is "quite thrilled when he describe[s] the murder of an elephant which he had perpetrated some years earlier" (82), a description that anticipates Orwell's famous 1936 essay, "Shooting an Elephant," and makes it doubtful that Flory shares Elizabeth's "thrill" for the subject.



Elizabeth's experiences following her mother's death – she dies of ptomaine poisoning,<sup>63</sup> a direct result of her “artistic” lifestyle – continually reiterate Elizabeth's adherence to the distinction between the “beastly” and the “lovely,” and frequently give her reasons to seek solace in the community from which Flory seeks refuge. Her choice to go to stay with her aunt and uncle in Kyauktada is determined by her desire to live in the economically elevating colonial community: “in anticipation she tasted the agreeable atmosphere of Clubs, with punkahs flapping and barefooted white-turbaned boys reverently salaaming [...]. It was almost as nice as being really rich” (92). But Elizabeth's aunt makes it clear that Elizabeth cannot live off of their hospitality indefinitely, going so far as to suggest that Elizabeth will have to leave and work to support herself if she is unable to find a husband: “I'm sure if I were a young girl I'd marry anybody, literally *anybody!*” (94). Though Flory shows early interest in Elizabeth and falls into the category of “literally anybody,” when Lieutenant Verrall arrives, the handsome, fit, young, and titled officer entices the overlapping desires of Mrs Lackersteen and Elizabeth – to marry off, and to marry up – and Flory's dubious position in the Club eliminates him as a suitor.<sup>64</sup> The celerity with which Elizabeth pursues the type of life Flory despises is enough for Flory to become disillusioned, realizing that she would not be able to provide him with the relationship and life he seeks: “He did not even idealize her any longer. He saw her now almost as she was – silly, snobbish, heartless – and it made no difference to his longing for her” (215).

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<sup>63</sup> “Ptomaine poisoning” is a now outmoded term for food poisoning. This is a death that can be attributed to Mrs Lackersteen's sanitary habits, and which reaffirms that, indeed, “life was cheaper” in Paris – to use the novel's pun – especially if one is an unsuccessful artist.

<sup>64</sup> It is also the case that Verrall's worldview is compatible with Elizabeth's division of life into the “beastly” and the “lovely” in ways that Flory's simply is not. The only things Verrall “seriously care[s] about” are “clothes and horses” (191) – two of things that most represent “loveliness” to Elizabeth – and the latter is so important to him that it has determined his career decisions: “He had come out to India in a British cavalry regiment, and exchanged into the Indian Army because it was cheaper and left him greater freedom for polo” (191).

Nevertheless, Flory's disillusionment threatens the system of signification he is using to avoid a suicidal state of absurdity, so Flory clings to his desire for Elizabeth even after it is clear to him that a romantic relationship with her could not provide a meaningful life. Flory is jealous of Verrall in a state that the narrator attributes simply to Envy: "Envy is a horrible thing. It is unlike all other kinds of suffering in that there is no disguising it, no elevating it into tragedy. It is more than merely painful, it is disgusting" (215). The impossibility of tragedy suggests a difficulty narrativizing Elizabeth and Verrall's romance, thus highlighting the extent to which it threatens the discourses that Flory is using to make sense of his life. Not wanting to face the existential threat that would result from this breakdown in meaning, Flory retreats to social isolation in the jungle to avoid Elizabeth and Verrall, only to return when the novel's submerged absurdity surfaces anyway: "He was standing at the jungle's edge by the bank of a dried-up stream, where he had walked to tire himself, watching some tiny, nameless finches[...]. He could not stay any longer in this deadly place, alone with his thoughts among the endless, mindless leaves" (204). This passage is set in a symbolically charged Eliotic waste land – a dried-up stream – that is nonetheless teeming with life. As in *The Waste Land*, the very breeding of the natural world, in the guise of the mating birds and the fragrant pods of the vanilla plant, shows the protagonist to be operating outside of the natural order, for it makes Flory feel nothing more than "staleness" and, once again, "deadly ennui" (204). That Flory views this scene as "deadly and meaningless" suggests a breakdown of signification itself, though the Dionysian experience of the meaningless is as far beyond the logical, glib narrator-driven style of *Burmese Days* as it would be beyond representation in the form of a syllogism, for the experience of the Dionysian is an intrinsically irrational state, beyond the Apollonian ordering of words present in grammatical meaning. The Dionysian does emerge briefly in a moment of obvious slippage from narrator to

Flory with the exclamation, “Alone, alone in the sea of life enisled!” (204), which comes as close as anything in *Burmese Days* to presenting Dionysian solitude, for the “sea of life” suggests a generalized state, and the image suggested is one of extreme vulnerability to an enormous and indifferent reality. Ultimately, though, even here Flory is drawn back to the particular circumstances of the situation, and Flory once again uses the figure of Elizabeth as the only anchor to a meaningful existence and the kind of rational ordering of life that can counteract the suicidal impulses that result from a Dionysian experience of the absurd.

Despite being unsatisfying and ultimately doomed, Flory’s relationship with Elizabeth does strengthen his ties to another assemblage, for it inspires him to behave as he knows he should in accordance with his duties to his friend, Veraswami, and thus seems to reinforce an assemblage that gives Flory some relief. When he is disgraced by their failed outing to the bazaar, Flory resolves to propose Veraswami for Club membership, but feels “as though he had never truly loved her till this moment” (126) and expects that their upcoming hunting expedition will “in some way put things right between them” (128). Flory’s decision to propose Veraswami supports the argument that “[Elizabeth’s] presence stir[s] Flory towards authentic action because of his mistaken belief that he [i]s no longer completely alone. He support[s] Veraswami on borrowed strength” (Carter 84). The novel makes this causal relationship between Elizabeth’s presence and Flory’s decision to recommend Veraswami clear, for in response to the question, asked after a decision to help Veraswami is made, “Why, after all these years [...] break the rules so suddenly?,” the narrator explains explicitly: “Elizabeth, by coming into his life, had so changed it and renewed it that all the dirty, miserable years might never have passed. Her presence had changed the whole orbit of his mind.[...] Just by existing she had made it possible for him [...] to act decently” (144). Though Flory is wrong about what kind of person Elizabeth

is, his incorrect assessment about her nature leads him to change his own behaviour, again suggesting that it can be the subject's assessment of the assemblage he or she is participating in, not the real shape of that assemblage, that shapes subjectivity, so that a realist description of an assemblage is not always a reasonable way to assess the actions undertaken because of one's membership in an assemblage.

Yet, the next step in proposing Veraswami for membership is only enacted when, embarrassed and upset after being humiliated by Verrall and ignored by Elizabeth, Flory broaches the issue at the Club as a result of his responding "incautiously" and "blasphemously" to Westfield's lecture on "the five chief beatitudes of the pukka sahib" (181). In this case, it is the increasing recognition of Elizabeth's nature that leads him to act unwisely: "Oh, shut up! I'm sick of the subject. Veraswami's a damned good fellow – a damned sight better than some white men I can think of. Anyway, I'm going to propose his name for the Club when the general meeting comes. Perhaps he'll liven this bloody place up a bit" (181). While the first step in proposing Veraswami's membership is inspired by his love for Elizabeth, the next is motivated by disappointment in Elizabeth and indifference to the other Club members.

As the possibility that Elizabeth might improve Flory has proven untenable, Flory's decision to propose Veraswami for Club membership ultimately proves fatal by making Flory an actor in the Veraswami/U Po Kyin conflict, and thus a direct threat to Po Kyin's ambitions; the fact that Flory's only protection against Po Kyin comes from Flory's race and position in the colonial community determines the nature of Po Kyin's attack on Flory, which can only succeed if Flory is definitively discredited among the other Club members, and is thus made a true outsider. Though Veraswami recognizes that the decision to propose him places Flory in grave danger, Flory remains convinced that as he is an Englishman, there is nothing that any Burmese

person can do to harm him, insisting, “Oh, good Lord, he can’t touch me” (143). Though Po Kyin had written him off as a coward, once Flory has become a hero by saving the Club from rebellion, Po Kyin’s “schemes [a]re undone” for, in Veraswami’s words, “this riot – or rather, [Flory’s] most noble behaviour in it – was quite outside U Po Kyin’s programme” (243). Po Kyin does not give up on his ambitions, though, but revises his strategy: “The time has come for a vigorous move.[...] We are hammering against a brick wall,[...] and that wall is Flory.[... But] let Flory be disgraced, and there is an end of the doctor” (248). In this way, Flory and Veraswami’s relationship draws Flory into the novel’s central oppositional assemblage, for both Veraswami and Po Kyin are here acting in response to their mutual enmity, and Flory’s renewed support of Veraswami makes him the main threat that must be eliminated.

Flory’s courtship of Elizabeth impacts his participation in all other assemblages by making all other relationships subordinate to it, motivating him to end his relationship with Ma Hla May, and it is this act that ultimately proves fatal. Though their relationship is destructive, the text is explicit that his rejection of Ma Hla May is, at best, ethically dubious: “There was a sufficient pretext – she had stolen his gold cigarette-case and pawned it [...] in the bazaar – but still, it was only a pretext. Flory knew perfectly well, and Ma Hla May knew, and all the servants knew, that he was getting rid of her because of Elizabeth” (108). It becomes clear just how damaging Flory’s rejection of Ma Hla May is when Flory returns home, having just promised to propose Veraswami for Club membership, to find Ma Hla May in his house, her appearance “degenerated extraordinarily” (145) since her dismissal. Hla May is unambiguous that Flory’s rejection means her ruination, and that she cannot return to her home town: “I who have been a *bo-kadaw*, a white man’s wife, to go home to my father’s house, and shake the paddy basket with old hags and women who are too ugly to find husbands!” (146). Of course, not sending Hla May

away and still marrying Elizabeth is not possible, and Hla May, who has “coated her face so thick with powder that it [is] like a clown’s mask” (145), seems to be undertaking a conspicuous performance. Nevertheless, she is likely not misrepresenting the problems caused by Flory’s rejection, and the fact that she faces serious consequences raises further doubts about whether Elizabeth’s presence is improving Flory.

His decision to propose Veraswami for Club membership, desperation to make himself appear as a fit suitor to Elizabeth, and rejection of Hla May all converge to draw Flory into the Po Kyin/Veraswami oppositional assemblage, and they now provide U Po Kyin with a means of destroying Flory, whose relationship with Hla May is seen, in the logic of the Club, as sufficiently shameful to undermine the apparent fitness of Flory’s place within the colonial community. Ultimately, Ma Hla May interrupts a church service, using public spectacle to force the unspeakable to be publicly acknowledged, and thereby forcing Flory’s past relationship with her to be judged according to Club dogma:

She was shrieking like a maniac. The people gaped at her, too astounded to move or speak.[...] She looked like a screaming hag of the bazaar. Flory’s bowels seemed to have turned to ice. Oh God, God! Must they know – must Elizabeth know – that *that* was the woman who had been his mistress?[...] She had screamed his name over and over again. Flo, hearing the familiar voice, wriggled from under the pew, walked down the aisle and wagged her tail at Ma Hla May. (258-9)

Though Elizabeth already knows that Flory has had a Burmese “mistress,” Flory is right in his assumption that actually seeing her in this guise will result in Elizabeth’s final rejection of him. Though Hla May cannot speak English, “the meaning of the scene [is] perfectly clear” (259) to Elizabeth. As Patai has pointed out, “[w]ere she not known to be his mistress, the European

community would simply sneer at the scene she makes in public. Their sexual relationship has, in this sense, given her some power over him” (41). An interpellation is at work here, and as she begins “actually to tear her clothes open” (259), Flory’s face attests to his guilt: “His face was as yellow as bone [...]. He sat staring at the altar, his face rigid and so bloodless that the birth-mark seemed to glow upon it like a streak of blue paint. Elizabeth glanced across the aisle at him, and her revulsion made her almost physically sick” (259). The futility of Flory’s attempt to ignore Ma Hla May’s dramatic accusations mirrors his belief that he can simply ignore the threats made on behalf of U Po Kyin, which culminate in this moment. The effect of Flory staring at the altar shows that Althusser’s famous example of interpellation – the police officer calls, and the criminal turns – outlines interpellation in too simple terms, for Flory’s very refusal to turn with the rest of the community confirms the truth of Hla May’s accusations.

As he holds Elizabeth against her will, insisting she “virtually promised to marry” him (261), the text focuses on the meaninglessness of Flory’s life as a result of the oppressive colonial social atmosphere to which he hoped a relationship with Elizabeth would provide a viable alternative. Flory tries yet again to explain his extreme isolation and suffering, in the hope that she will choose to be with him if she understands the stakes: “Haven’t I told you something of the life we live here? The sort of horrible death-in-life! The decay, the loneliness, the self-pity?” (262). It is “useless talking about it” (262) because his experiences of such states are, themselves, beyond explanation, and are rooted in a pain that is disordered and beyond rational explanation. His insistence that she’s “the sole person on earth who could save [him] from it” (262) may seem fatuous, especially given how ill-matched they are. All the same, he knows he cannot bear his solitude much longer, so it may well be that she is the “sole person” who could help, if only because she is the only one present and available at the crucial moment, and because

she is his only remaining connection to a rationally ordered worldview. It seems unlikely that she “could save [him] from” his suffering for more than a brief period, though, as she is obviously not equipped to give him the sort of life he would need to survive.

The focus on the relationship between small- and large-scale community and the attempt to use the micro to create new and better macroscopic discourses continue throughout Orwell’s career. In *Burmese Days*, Flory’s suicide represents a failed attempt at assemblage to form interpersonal relationships. The goal Flory seeks by attempting to generate such a small-scale assemblage is to create and occupy one of the new forms of subjectivity that are created by the new kinds of relationality offered by new group members. This may have the additional benefit of changing the network of relationships that daily shapes Club discourse. *Burmese Days* is, thus, concerned with forming a small-scale assemblage that will enable the protagonist to escape the weight of personal memory and habitual participation in colonialism by either allowing him to find refuge in a new small-scale assemblage from unsatisfactory membership in a larger assemblage, or to try to change that larger assemblage from within. In Orwell’s autobiographical documentary of the Spanish Civil War, *Homage to Catalonia*, the focus shifts to using personal memory to counter contemporary newspaper accounts. As the reporting on the Spanish Civil War creates collective memory to legitimize the scapegoating of the POUM militia – which Orwell fought as a member of – it also delegitimizes the bottom-up political organization that Orwell believes briefly succeeded in creating a better way of life than he has ever witnessed.



### **Assemblage, Community, and Subjectivity in *Homage to Catalonia***

By the late eighteenth century, the soldier has become something that can be made; out of a formless clay, an inapt body, the machine required can be constructed; posture is gradually corrected; a calculated constraint runs slowly through each part of the body, mastering it, making it pliable, ready at all times, turning silently into the automatism of habit; in short, one has “got rid of the peasant” and given him “the air of a soldier.” (Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 135, quoting an Ordinance of 20 March 1764)<sup>65</sup>

While the focus on the individual’s place in community on exhibit in *Burmese Days* continues throughout his corpus, the nature and validity of Orwell’s treatment of community remains one of the most contested areas of Orwell scholarship. For instance, Raymond Williams casts Orwell as an exile, and suggests,

when the exile speaks of liberty, he is in a curiously ambiguous position, for while the rights in question may be called individual, the condition of their guarantee is inevitably social. The exile, because of his own personal position, cannot finally believe in any social guarantee: to him, because this is the pattern of his own living, almost all association is suspect. (*Culture and Society* 310)

Christopher Hitchens summarizes Williams as saying, “if you must criticize, do so from within and make sure that your criticisms are constructive” (53) before suggesting – referring to Orwell’s essay, “Inside the Whale,” which relies on the story of Jonah and the whale to discuss passive participation in society as opposed to political engagement – that “Williams is inviting Orwell and all of us to step back inside the whale!” (Hitchens 52). While two of the more famous Orwell scholars agree on the importance of community to Orwell’s writing, they disagree on the

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<sup>65</sup> *Surveiller et punir: Naissance de la prison* (1975).

fundamental question of whether Orwell is writing for or against a particular community – or the very possibility of community – and whether he is writing as outsider or active group member.

*Homage to Catalonia* is important to such considerations because it marks a turning point in Orwell's own understanding of "community," and figures subjectivity in terms of the complex and multivalent expectations placed on subjects who are able to be members of several communities at a given time. The political manipulation of language, discourse, and history Orwell presents in *Homage to Catalonia* challenges, from the bottom up, Williams's idea that a community "is necessarily a totality" – a statement that complicates the idea of assemblage by ignoring the exteriority of relations – showing just how fractured communities can be, while also emphasizing that one is frequently pulled between one's roles in various communities. Orwell's treatment in *Homage* suggests that one can be exiled on scales smaller than "society," and that being an "exile" can sometimes be relative to what one views as one's particular responsibilities to a particular community in a particular social context.

Throughout *Homage to Catalonia*, the relative subjective obligations placed on Orwell<sup>66</sup> shift as he changes from being a member of the POUM militia to a husband, an Englishman, and a writer. Tensions between individuals and communities – on multiple scales – impregnate every stage of this process, as Orwell is continually forced to assess the groups he is acting as a part of, the expectations group membership place on him, and the options that are possible within a given social and political moment.

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<sup>66</sup> That is, the narrator, whom I will refer to as "Orwell," given the literary arrangement of an autobiographical narrative and the constructed persona of its main character. I reserve Orwell's legal name, Eric Blair, for instances in which I discuss historical accounts of the events of the Spanish Civil War that do not originate from *Homage to Catalonia*, and for situations beyond his role as author-function. Similarly, I refer to Eric Blair's wife as Eileen Blair when discussing the historical person independent of her representation in *Homage to Catalonia*. This is done to manage the fact that *Homage to Catalonia* is a work of creative non-fiction that both occasionally fictionalizes and modifies events for the sake of generating a narrative that is both literary and historically grounded and plausible.

## The POUM Militia

The first community addressed in *Homage to Catalonia* is located at the Lenin Barracks, the training grounds of the POUM militia, where Orwell becomes part of a military force that is largely an experimental, *ad hoc* assemblage. The peculiar structure of the militia – as Orwell explains, “the units of command were the ‘section’, of about thirty men, the *centuria*, of about a hundred men, and the ‘column’, which in practice meant any large number of men” – is partially the result of the material circumstances of the war’s revolutionary beginning: this system is in place because militias were “hurriedly raised by the trade unions at the beginning of the war, [and] had not yet been organized on an ordinary army basis” (5). As the initial resistance to Franco’s military coup was not undertaken by a group with institutional military training, but by trade unions, there is little reason they should have chosen to structure their forces according to their enemy’s traditions rather than their own. Naturally, the Republic attempts to professionalize its forces during Orwell’s time with the POUM as a classical organization of fighters comes to appear more necessary.

Similarly, as revolution demanded immediate armed resistance (28), it did not allow for large-scale industrial premeditation. This shaped the material components of the militia assemblages, for Orwell suggests that the lack of industrial buildup created problems for maintaining a broad and consistent supply of war goods. For example, while “[e]veryone’s clothes followed the same general plan” during this period, “they were never quite the same in any two cases” because “the clothes had to be issued as this or that factory rushed them out” (7). The differences in uniform, while emphasizing the assembled nature of militias relative to other military groups, provoke Orwell to poke fun at the idea of calling the clothing worn by the militia a “uniform,” suggesting, “[p]erhaps a ‘multiform’ would be the proper name for it” (7).

Orwell's treatment of this situation emphasizes that, when arriving in Spain, a POUM "militia column was an extraordinary-looking rabble" (6-7).

This slightly comic scene does not diminish the value of the POUM for Orwell, but rather elevates it by emphasizing the militia's roots and purpose: it is a rebel militia fighting against a formal army. The attire of the militia members has an important symbolic function, for it signifies their oppositional subjectivity, their appearance highlighting what makes them different from their enemy, which is ruled via a traditional top-down chain of command. Additionally, Orwell's treatment of the militia's uniforms show Franco's forces to be ridiculous and insincere partially because they *too* sincerely perform martiality, like the waiter Sartre discusses in *Being and Nothingness* whose 'bad faith' is suggested by the fact that "[h]is movement is [...] a little too precise, a little too rapid" (101). While the POUM multiform is a consequence of the material conditions at the beginning of the war, its semiological significance both builds on these roots and queers martial masculinity itself, especially as it is on display by Franco's forces.

Rather than exhibiting comic absurdity, though, Orwell's depictions of the training provided at the Lenin Barracks rely on a more pessimistic form of existential absurdity. It is obvious to Orwell that, "if you have only a few days in which to train a soldier, you must teach him the things he will most need; how to take cover, how to advance across open ground, how to mount guards and build a parapet – above all, how to use his weapons" (8-9). Yet, the instruction that begins as "frightful scenes of chaos" (7) never flowers into anything more than what the narrator calls "parade-ground drill[s] of the most antiquated, stupid kind; right turn, left turn, about turn, marching at attention in column of threes and all the rest of that useless nonsense which I had learned when I was fifteen years old" (8). As he remarks, it is an "extraordinary form for the training of a guerrilla army to take" (8), which resulted in a "mob of eager children,

who were going to be thrown into the front line in a few days' time, [but who] were not even taught how to fire a rifle or pull the pin out of a bomb" (9).<sup>67</sup> Though the training is little more than a grimly inadequate parody of training, it is, like the militia uniforms, largely a consequence of the material realities that emerged as a consequence of the war's beginnings as a revolution in response to a military coup, which demanded continued engagement at the front by anyone who knew how to fight. At the beginning of the war, facing a desperate shortage of arms and training, the militias simply were not equipped with the skills that would eventually be drilled into soldiers in the Popular Army. That said, "[w]hatever the deficiencies of the militia, if they had not held the line in the most difficult circumstances then Franco would have won. The training and equipping of the Republic's Popular Army was only possible because the militia were in place" (Newsinger 46). In the midst of a revolution that required a continuous stream of new recruits to the front, the troop movement could not be halted long enough for the system to be reorganized. When Orwell arrives, the militias are providing training that can do no more than make those who do not know better feel they can face a formally trained army.

The consequences of the revolution's material circumstances are dwarfed, however, by its discursive circumstances, which force a different grounding from conventional military discipline, while also seeming to undermine the ability of those knowledgeable few to prepare their troops adequately. The task of training POUM militia members is made difficult by the fact that POUM revolutionary ideology emphasizes individual liberty to the extent that conducting the "antiquated [...] stupid" drills successfully comes to seem a notable accomplishment. The "revolutionary ardour" that is so strong in the recruits, who are "mostly boys of sixteen or

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<sup>67</sup> This becomes something of a non-issue when the militia members are finally armed. Orwell claims that he received "a German Mauser dated 1896 – more than forty years old! It was rusty, the bolt was stiff, the wooden barrel-guard was split; one glance down the muzzle showed that it was corroded and past praying for. Most of the rifles were equally bad, some of them even worse" (17).

seventeen from the back streets of Barcelona” (7), interferes with military exercises of discipline. As Orwell notes, “if a man disliked an order he [...] stepped out of the ranks and argued fiercely with the officer” (8). The extent of the challenge is evident in the group’s instructor, who is one of the few members of the militia with military training and whose political beliefs complicate his ability to instruct the men: “The lieutenant who instructed us [...] had previously been a Regular Army officer [...]. Curiously enough he was a sincere and ardent Socialist. Even more than the men themselves he insisted upon complete social equality between all ranks” (8). To put it in Deleuzian terms, this is a form of territorialization that demands that other forms of subjectivity to membership in the militia also remain active, and a form of coding that simultaneously demands and prevents territorialization while also challenging its own status as coding. In this way, the lieutenant’s attempt to combine past and present modes of subjectivity makes the prospect of “orders” virtually impossible. The lieutenant’s firm adherence to the ideal of “social equality between all ranks” creates a corps that initially appears to be a military body consisting of soldiers who are to a large extent free to grant or withhold their consent at any given moment. Nevertheless, the ideal end product remains a group of subjects who have internalized and naturalized the demands of subjectivity. For orders to function in this setting, soldiers require “an understanding of *why* orders must be obeyed” (29) sufficient that they choose to follow them, despite the fact that “army discipline is theoretically voluntary” (28) and soldiers largely remain free to disobey them. What results is a system where officers frequently have to appeal to soldiers “in the name of comradeship” in cases where the threat of a court-martial might ordinarily suffice, for while Orwell indicates that though “[t]he normal military punishments existed” during his time at the barracks, “they were only invoked for very serious offences” (29).

All the same, what Orwell refers to as the new recruits' "'revolutionary' discipline" (29) remains based on the arrangement of what Foucault treats as "docile bodies" in space, and the "understanding" and continued consent of soldiers forms the discursive grounding of their subjectivity as surely as would the threat of punishment, and the training remains designed to produce an "automatism of habit" (*Discipline* 135) conducive to collective military action, regardless of the content of the discourses utilized to legitimize the mode of subjectivity that will produce such automatism. While the POUM militia does not train its soldiers how to properly fire a rifle, it aims to produce the sort of soldiers who could participate in the collective action that makes rifle fire most effective in war.

Despite the obvious difficulties with mixed Republican disciplinary technologies, Orwell argues that it produced soldiers more fit to fight in the Spanish Civil War than would a conventional disciplinary approach because the militias were not conventional military bodies grounded in typical martial discourses; therefore, they required that the soldiers' continued consent to participate in military service. One of the primary benefits is that the participation of the POUM soldiers is "based on class-loyalty, whereas the discipline of a bourgeois conscript army is based ultimately on fear" (28-9), and that, in many instances, this voluntary acceptance of military service makes for more reliable soldiers: "until about June 1937 there was nothing to keep them there, except class loyalty. Individual deserters could be shot [...] but if a thousand men had decided to walk out of the line together there was no force to stop them" (29). While it is likely that a "conscript army in the same circumstances [...] would have melted away" (29-30), Orwell suggests that he has "only heard of four men deserting, and two of those were fairly certainly spies who had enlisted to obtain information" (30). Furthermore, though it is time-consuming to create martial subjects who will follow orders voluntarily without the threat of

consequences if they fail to do so, “it also takes time to drill a man into an automaton on the barrack-square” (29) in a more conventional disciplinary regime. In short, Orwell suggests that the decision to emphasize individual liberty as a justification for discipline may create grave difficulties, but it is also an effective way to produce a fighting force consisting of individual subjects who are at once indoctrinated in the Spanish revolutionary position on individual liberty and are adequately disciplined to fight what is largely a trench war despite being theoretically free to stop fighting whenever they choose.

The reliance on vague revolutionary ideology as a substitute for repressive technologies in the Barracks does not translate into the POUM demanding broad ideological orthodoxy for the men fighting, however. Orwell notes that there is “very little heresy-hunting in the POUM, perhaps not enough, considering their special circumstances; short of being a pro-Fascist no one was penalized for holding the wrong political opinions.[...] I myself never joined the party – for which afterwards, when the POUM was suppressed, I was rather sorry” (220-1). This tolerance of ideological impurity goes well beyond the tolerance shown by the European Left intelligentsia during Orwell’s lifetime,<sup>68</sup> and contrasts the POUM to the Spanish Communists’ requirement of subordination to party doctrine and inquisition-style tactics for dealing with those thought to deviate from the ‘party line.’<sup>69</sup> That said, Woodcock observes that “*Homage to Catalonia* is [...] an elegy on men like [those fighting in the POUM ...] but it is not a lament for their ideals”

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<sup>68</sup> For detailed accounts of the Left Intelligentsia attempts to suppress or otherwise discredit Orwell, see Hitchens, 35-78; Zwerdling 3-37.

<sup>69</sup> It is not clear whether the tolerance of other political opinions generally extended as far with others as it did in Orwell’s case. Nonetheless, the POUM did not undertake ideological purges of the sort or scale common among international communist parties. Instead, this description of the POUM comes suspiciously close to Orwell’s own position prior to learning the truth about inter-party fighting behind the republican lines:

At Monte Pocero, when they pointed to the position on our left and said: “Those are the Socialists” (meaning the P.S.U.C.), I was puzzled and said: “Aren’t we all Socialists?” I thought it idiotic that people fighting for their lives should *have* separate parties; my attitude always was, “Why can’t we drop all this political nonsense and get on with the war?” This of course was the correct “anti-Fascist” attitude which had been carefully disseminated by the English newspapers[.] (198)



(*Crystal* 174). Though Orwell comes to appreciate the Trotskyist POUM position, in which the war cannot be separated from the revolution, his appreciation only comes after the suppression of the POUM. At the time, Orwell “accepted the Communist viewpoint, which boiled down to saying: ‘We can’t talk of revolution till we’ve won the war’, and not the POUM viewpoint, which boiled down to saying: ‘We must go forward or we shall go back’” (216-7).<sup>70</sup> Though Orwell later decides “that the POUM were right, or at any rate righter than the Communists,” the decision is made “not altogether upon a point of theory” (217). Rather, it arises as the POUM forms an oppositional assemblage with the Communist-controlled Republican government; in short, the imposition of POUM subjectivity onto Orwell that accompanies the persecution of POUM militiamen functions as a form of interpellation that prompts in Orwell heightened feelings of loyalty and solidarity, so that he wishes he could have had a more formal membership in the party.

The discursive permissiveness of the POUM militia, in terms of the ideological looseness of its members, is likely related to the fact that the militia was, in many ways, assembled from a broader group than most military forces. Orwell’s observation that, “[s]ince 1930 the Fascists had won all the victories,” along with the expression of his desire to diminish “the international prestige of Fascism” when arriving in Spain, led Orwell to believe that it was “time they got a beating, it hardly mattered from whom” (140). This captures the opinions of fighters drawn far and wide to the Republican cause. But, even though the Spanish War became “a rallying point for left-leaning middle-class writers, artists, and intellectuals,” Patricia Rae also notes that “the popular sense of it as a ‘poet’s war’ has distorted our sense of who fought and why” (392). Of

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<sup>70</sup> Lionel Trilling summarizes the communist position more precisely: “When the war was won, the political and social problems would be solved, but until the war should be won, any debate over these problems was to be avoided as leading only to the weakening of the united front against Franco” (75).

course, it is difficult to speak concretely about many of the soldiers Orwell fought with, for as Patai points out, “Orwell does not tell us about any of his comrades as individuals; they are interchangeable men doing their jobs” (137).

Yet, the interpersonal component of life as a member of the POUM is emphasized by Orwell’s choice to open *Homage to Catalonia* with one such instance of meaningful personal interaction:

While they were talking round the table some remark brought it out that I was a foreigner. The Italian raised his head and said quickly:

“*Italiano?*”

I answered in my bad Spanish: “*No, Inglés. Y tú?*”

“*Italiano.*”

As we went out he stepped across the room and gripped my hand very hard.[...] It was as though his spirit and mine had momentarily succeeded in bridging the gulf of language and tradition and meeting in utter intimacy. (1-2)

Patai argues that “this description [...] is thoroughly conventional” (131) and insists that drawing attention to his fellow militiaman does little more than frame Orwell’s narrative as an orthodox celebration of martial masculinity. The account “reinforce[es] a paradigm of manhood against which men must ever measure themselves” (158), emphasizing that the Italian militiaman “is not only tough, he is also ignorant, probably illiterate, and Orwell depicts the man’s pathetic reverence for his supposed betters” (131). Even so, it is possible that the man grips Orwell’s hand “very hard” not because he thinks Orwell is “his supposed better,” nor because Orwell is *Inglés*, but because neither man is Catalan. One thing the two men share is the experience of leaving their homelands to fight for an ideal.

Each outsider legitimizes the other's decision to go to war, a fact that is not neutralized by the palpable sexuality implied by their "meeting in utter intimacy" and that reasserts martial masculinity as well as comradeship. The symbolic nature of their shared decision is signalled by the fact that Orwell is not able to state *why* this Italian militiaman has come to Spain, just as he does not state exactly why his imprisoned commanding officer, Georges Kopp, has joined the war. Instead, Orwell notes that Kopp "was a man who had sacrificed everything – family, nationality, livelihood – simply to come to Spain and fight against Fascism" (171). Just as the Foreign Enlistment Act of 1937 made it illegal for Canadians to fight in the Spanish Civil War but did not stop approximately 1,700 Canadians from doing so (Rae 389), Kopp went so far as to disobey the laws of his homeland to fight in Spain, and would likely face legal consequences if he were ever to return home.<sup>71</sup> Given Orwell's insistence that "[o]ne was always making contacts of that kind [i.e., the Italian militiaman] in Spain" (2), the affinity the soldiers feel for one another arises not from a common language or from a strict ideological orthodoxy, but from a common decision to place values above the purely national elements of their subjectivities. Paradoxically, though, this indifference to ideological impurity does not suggest that the militias are un-coded assemblages, but merely that much of the coding takes place on the level of fellow-feeling rather than political belief.

In contrast, the Communists and their attempts to persecute "Trotskyism" represent an imposition of a linear top-down structure onto assemblages of more or less independent, bottom-up units powered by the passionate beliefs of militia members. Actions in *Homage to Catalonia* originating from the militias and on a micro-scale are shown to have shaped the larger social

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<sup>71</sup> As Orwell puts it, "[b]y [...] joining a foreign army while he was on the Belgian Army reserve, and [...] by helping to manufacture munitions illegally for the Spanish Government, he had piled up years of imprisonment for himself if he should ever return to his own country" (*Homage* 171).

order, as is evident in the descriptions of the May street-fighting: “the people began to leave the barricades of their own accord [...] [T]here was no generally accepted leadership and no fixed plan – indeed, so far as one could judge, no plan at all except a vague determination to resist the Assault Guards” (223-4). While political leaders had a role in creating the general atmosphere that led the people to funnel into the streets, Orwell believes it is a mistake to see these actions as products of the political parties. Rather than adhering to a top-down institutional explanation for the street-fighting, he draws a parallel to the attack on the Telephone Exchange, where individuals acted so swiftly that they left politicians scrambling to decide how to respond: “My own opinion is that the fighting was only pre-concerted in the sense that everyone expected it. There were no signs of any very definite plan on either side [...]. The people came into the streets and their political leaders followed reluctantly, or did not follow at all” (225). Ultimately, even what Orwell views as the most well-intentioned media accounts were doomed to miss the mark when they described these unfolding events because they assumed that a large-scale event such as the May street-fighting simply must have begun with orders from the political parties. The result of this belief was an inaccurate and wildly inconsistent account of the fighting that went a great way towards providing the other parties with a prefabricated rationalization for the scapegoating of the POUM.

### **Inter-Party Polemics**

Of course, Orwell’s account of the Spanish Civil War does also contain instances of the political parties’ premeditated manipulation of large numbers of individuals. As he states of such macro-level activity, “No event in [the war], at any rate during the first year, is intelligible unless one has some grasp of the inter-party struggle that was going on behind the Government lines” (188). Yet what is described as “the kaleidoscope of political parties and trade unions, with their

tiresome names – PSUC, POUM, FAI, CNT, UGT, JCI, JSU, AIT,” which make it seem “as though Spain were suffering from a plague of initials” (197) – is a heterogeneity with paradoxical consequences. The sheer number of these organizations provides the individual with choice, even as the political parties in question reduce this agency to little more than a choice among future totalitarian dictators. In addition, for a time, the sheer number of parties prevented any from gaining too much power. But however little the average civilian follows what is happening within and between “the mob of parties and sub-parties with their confusing names” (222), the evolving social and military atmosphere creates a situation where it becomes increasingly important to become affiliated with one of these groups: “Everyone, however unwillingly, took sides sooner or later. For even if one cared nothing for the political parties and their conflicting ‘lines’, it was too obvious that one’s own destiny was involved” (198). This is the first way that individuals are drawn into the macro-economics of power that play out in the growing conflict between the parties. As the war progresses, some sort of party allegiance becomes necessary merely to fight against Franco, and growing party/militia membership strengthens the parties as imagined communities.<sup>72</sup> This process creates an arms race of polemics: polemics lead to a need for party identity, which leads to the legitimation and increasing importance of polemics if one wishes to survive the polemics of the others.

While this increase of polemics is a territorializing process that increases the perceived importance of party identity, and even increases Orwell’s sense of loyalty to the POUM, it does not seem to foster a great deal of loyalty to the parties gaining the upper hand in the internecine struggle. Though many of the Spanish Republicans are expected to follow orders when issued, there is evidence that individuals do not always agree with the polemics enough to consent to do

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<sup>72</sup> Orwell’s own experience haphazardly joining the POUM only to end up in mortal danger because he was a member of this militia (Bowker 202-3) is a very clear illustration of this process.

the parties' bidding unless forced to. At the most benign level, this incredulousness is the source of the incongruities between newspaper accounts of party dynamics and the ways in which soldiers treat one another at the line: "The PSUC militiamen whom I knew in the line, the Communists from the International Brigade whom I met from time to time, never called me a Trotskyist or a traitor; they left that kind of thing to the journalists in the rear" (214). Clearly, the soldiers are either unaware of such media accounts, or, more likely, do not believe them to be credible. The officer Orwell encounters when trying to retrieve Kopp's letter provides a telling example of this disjunction between party polemics and individual actions:

I could hear an agitated conversation. "It's all up," I thought. We should never get Kopp's letter back. Moreover I had had to confess that I was in the POUM myself, and no doubt they would ring up the police and get me arrested, just to add another Trotskyist to the bag. Presently, however, the officer reappeared, fitting on his cap, and sternly signed to me to follow.[...] There was no more to be said; it was time to part. Both of us bowed slightly. And then there happened a strange and moving thing. The little officer hesitated a moment, then stepped across and shook hands with me. (185-6)

Lynette Hunter suggests that this "moment is of great significance to the narrator, for despite the official's duty to arrest POUM members, despite the general suspicion of fascist spies, a bond has been created in his recognition of the narrator's individual courage and loyalty," and she notes that "the action resonates strongly with the handshake of the Italian soldier in the introduction to the book" (91). But the officer's admiration of Orwell's courage is neither here nor there in Orwell's description; rather, it is the *officer's* courage that is most evident in this passage. It is, after all, almost certain from this account that by assisting Orwell he is risking his position and even his life. That the officer helps Orwell anyway shows that he ranks other

subjective obligations above inter-party polemics. Because he does not believe the media coding of the activities of the parties, he disregards his highly territorialized role as a police officer to behave in a way he knows he is not supposed to. The officer in the scene is pulled between two different duties: his official duty, and some version of what could be termed his human duty. That he sees the two as distinct from one another is, in itself, enough to suggest that the inter-party polemics are less than convincing; that he is willing to put his human duty before his official duty shows the distaste individuals have for inter-party polemics throughout *Homage to Catalonia*.

Nonetheless, the gap between polemics and individual opinion does not eliminate the power provided by imagined intra-party solidarity. Rather, it creates an odd dynamic where members of different groups view one another as comrades, but realize that they may have to turn on their comrades if ordered to do so. This is exemplified by the exchange between the POUM militiamen and the Assault Guards during the May street-fighting: “I had to spend my time sitting on a roof opposite Assault Guards as bored as myself, who periodically waved to me and assured me that they were ‘workers’ (meaning that they hoped I would not shoot them), but who would certainly open fire if they got the order to do so” (127). Here, a peculiar contrast between territorialization and coding is on display, so that while the fear of not behaving according to their assigned roles acts as a territorializing force, the soldiers’ incredulity to the coding of the ongoing events makes them resistant to this territorialization – until the threat of death makes the territorialization absolute. Even though many individuals actually fighting do not seem to believe the newspaper accounts, the realization that all of the parties are issuing orders based on these narratives – with the assumption that the members of the other groups will follow orders if issued – creates a situation similar to that faced by most soldiers in most

warzones: like the Master Gunner in *Jacob's Room*, each individual has to attack those declared to be the enemy, for it is likely to be fatal if the enemy attacks first. Thus, Orwell acknowledges that if the POUM were outlawed, they would have to “make preparations at once to seize the Café Moka” (124), even though the Assault Guards in Café Moka have become good friends with the POUM militiamen. The circumstances surrounding the street-fighting create subjects about as enthusiastic to do what is expected of them as Flory is to act on behalf of British imperialism in *Burmese Days*. The fighting makes it imperative to follow orders, but it also creates a situation where individual soldiers are likely not to agree with those orders and are likely not eager to act spontaneously for the official interests of their party; such gaps between polemics and individual opinion, on the one hand, and territorialization and coding, on the other, are far from ideal in a battle that is largely waged for ideological reasons.

But these facts alone do little to reveal the territorializing technologies used to shift power out of the hands of the trade unions and into the clutches of the government. Operating on a spatiotemporal scale larger than individuals enables the government to manipulate the macroscopic power structure. The effects of these changes remain unnoticed, primarily because they unfold on a longer time-scale than quotidian individual thought. The government strategy is to make small changes in numerous areas, but to make enough of them over a long enough period to eventually secure the majority of power: “the aim of the Government was to recover such power as remained in the hands of the trade unions [...] by a series of small moves – a policy of pin-pricks” (205). As the government – thanks largely to the Soviet-backed PSUC (*Partido Socialista Unificado de Cataluña* or Unified Socialist Party of Catalonia) – continually territorializes official responsibilities and becomes a hub of activity, planning campaigns and accessing large networks of information that neither ordinary individuals nor trade unions can



access, it becomes easier for the government to make demands of individuals and trade unions than it is for individuals and unions to make demands of the government: “The workers could always be brought to heel by an argument that is almost too obvious to need stating: ‘Unless you do this, that and the other we shall lose the war.’ In every case, needless to say, it appeared that the thing demanded by military necessity was the surrender of something that the workers had won for themselves in 1936” (205). This process seems to work precisely because of its macroscopic scale: individuals and unions cannot gather a sufficient amount of information about large-scale military operations. Because the government is responsible for multiple actions, while individuals can only be present for a few of these actions and unions can only have reliable information about those few in which they are directly involved, and because the government is able to access information from more sources than are individuals, the government is able to claim plausibly that they know better than anyone what sacrifices are required to win the war. As Orwell implies, it is probably not coincidence that their opinion happens to coincide with the interests of the USSR-supported PSUC. As a result, the government is gradually able to bend the will of the masses by manipulating the trade unions that began the revolution. That this strategy would be so successful is the structural consequence of a system that needs to operate both efficiently and, to a great extent, secretly.

Interestingly, Orwell shows the PSUC using both short and long-term tactics to attract support and siphon power from the other unions. On the one hand, a similar tactic to the government’s policy of pin-pricks seems to be at work in the scapegoating of the POUM: “Tentatively at first, then more loudly, [the Communists] began to assert that the POUM was splitting the Government forces not by bad judgment but by deliberate design.[...] The POUM was a ‘Trotskyist’ organization and ‘Franco’s Fifth Column’” (214). By beginning slowly,

initially portraying the POUM as inept and gradually making more grave accusations, PSUC propaganda proceeds from a plausible beginning to a highly implausible conclusion in a way that appears, to the average person reading the newspaper, sensible – almost as though working for Franco is just the new low of a clearly troublesome group, or perhaps has always been the case, which could certainly explain a lot. On the other hand, it is by making plans with clear short-term benefits that the PSUC is able to attract popular support. After all, Orwell himself admits that, for a time, he “preferred the Communist viewpoint to that of the POUM” largely because “[t]he Communists had a definite practical policy, an obviously better policy from the point of view of the common sense which looks only a few months ahead” (212). It is precisely because the POUM’s day-to-day policy is so bad, Orwell insists, that they are not able to gain more popular support. As Christopher Hollis has noted, though, “no version of history such as [the PSUC version] has passed into the history books” (107), and this suggests that time is able not only to obscure, but also to reveal attempts to manipulate fact.

Nevertheless, events on an even larger time-scale have an enormous impact on what kind of actions are available to the parties. This is, once again, best exemplified by the May street-fighting: “Barcelona is a town with a long history of street-fighting. In such places things happen quickly, the factions are ready-made, everyone knows the local geography, and when the guns begin to shoot people take their places almost as in a fire-drill” (228). The citizens of Barcelona have been habituated in patterns that have developed over centuries, so that the behavior of everyone participating in the Barcelona street-fighting is shaped by the continuing life of the city. As Steven Johnson argues, cities accumulate habits over long periods and condition their citizens to act in predictable ways, in a process analogous to the way the immune system manages to learn without being organized by a centralized intelligence. As Johnson puts it, “[t]he

body learns without consciousness, and so do cities” (103). Johnson cites Florence’s silk weavers and goldsmiths to illustrate his point, noting that they have occupied the same space since 1100CE, and that despite all of the changes that have happened in Florence the past 900 or so years, this pattern has been sustained (102). In this argument, cities as old as Barcelona – whose founding is thought to pre-date Rome and is recorded in myth more than history – have a way of sustaining patterns of behavior that have been passed down for thousands of years, and can be extremely difficult to alter. In Orwell’s account, it seems that the pattern of Barcelona street-fighting unfolds according to such a pattern, so that, in certain respects, Barcelona itself is a valid historical actor that shapes the events unfolding in the city. Orwell’s earlier insistence that the street-fighting happens spontaneously suggests that habits from time immemorial are able to shape the nature of the street-fighting more than orders from party leaders, and goes a long way toward showing the extent to which the parties are not free to manipulate events in any way they choose. As individuals often have to navigate macro-political contexts too large for them to understand or master, in this case, the macro-political organizations are operating within a nexus of events unfolding on a time-scale too large for them to control. In the case of Barcelona, the city acts as an assemblage that has the power to shape individual action in ways that are not always consistent with the parties’ wishes.

### **George, Eileen, and England**

Ultimately, the scapegoating of the POUM is influenced by activities that unfold on a variety of spatiotemporal scales, and as a consequence of this political persecution, Orwell’s subjective allegiances shift such that modes of his subjectivity previously subordinated or eliminated by his militia service are eventually liberated. This shift of subjectivity forms the structural core of *Homage to Catalonia*, for it coincides with Orwell’s move from innocence to

experience. Orwell's descriptions of his time at the front, which include statements such as "[i]t was rather fun wandering about the dark valleys with the stray bullets flying high overhead like redshanks whistling" (26), exhibit what Jeffrey Meyers characterizes as "boyish naïveté in combat" (67). However, when "the political realities darken his vision, the fighting does not seem quite so much 'fun' as before," and for this reason, Meyers insists, "*Homage* is a *Bildungsroman der Realpolitik*" (67). In a similar vein, Hunter discusses the structure of *Homage* in terms of a shift in temporal perspective: "the older, more experienced present narrator is explanatory and cautious, but he realizes that he alone cannot fully present the past without losing a sense of experience. So the past narrator exists in tension with him, generating ambiguities and paradoxes" (72). As "past and present narrators approach each other through [a] tension of memory" (81), Orwell's own disillusionment is replicated in the experience of readers, who are disillusioned in the same process as was Orwell.<sup>73</sup>

Perhaps most significant of Orwell's previously subservient modes of subjectivity liberated by the scapegoating of the POUM is his role as husband, which gradually shapes an increasing amount of his activity as he becomes increasingly disillusioned with inter-party polemics and develops into the present narrator. As Hunter notes, the first mention of his wife, Eileen, does not occur until the sixth chapter (*Homage* 54),<sup>74</sup> by which point "one is aware of a change in stance on the part of the past narrator [...]. He is far more personal in his comments

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<sup>73</sup> The implications of this process may even reach beyond *Homage to Catalonia*, for critics almost invariably treat *Homage* as a turning point in Orwell's career. For instance, the shift from past to present narrator seems to fit with Raymond Williams's argument that, "[i]nstead of dividing [Orwell's writing until 1937] into 'fiction' and 'documentaries' we should see them as sketches toward the creation of his most successful character, 'Orwell'" ("Observation" 61). Likewise, Patai sees Orwell's construction of a conventional patriarchal/martial narrative in terms of Orwell's creation of his own authorial identity (143).

<sup>74</sup> The original Chapter Six has been shifted up to become Chapter Five when the original Chapter Five was moved to Appendix I in the cited edition of the text, in accordance with Orwell's desire to move the political discussions to the end of the text to privilege structure and aesthetics in the event the text be reprinted (see Peter Davidson xiv-xv).

[...]; he is more reflective and finally more evaluative” (Hunter 79).<sup>75</sup> On her arrival in Spain, Eileen undertook activities seemingly designed to support her husband’s military activities, first getting a job as a secretary for the Independent Labour Party’s publication *New Leader*, under John McNair, ILP General Secretary who arranged Orwell’s joining the POUM in the first place (see Bowker 210; Meyers 68).

Eileen’s influence on the events of *Homage to Catalonia* increases dramatically when Orwell returns to Barcelona “after three and a half months at the front” to find “a startling change of atmosphere” (*Homage* 92). Orwell has come back with the intention of getting transferred out of the POUM to “enter some other unit that would ensure [his] being sent to the Madrid front,” and even goes so far as to seek a place in the International Column by attempting to get “a recommendation from a member of the Communist Party” (102). But while Orwell awaits his recommendation, the Barcelona street-fighting breaks out, and Eileen risks her life to join Orwell in the Hotel Falcón – a “sort of boarding-house maintained by the POUM” (107) – “in case a nurse should be needed” (125). Holed up, Orwell and Eileen together risk being killed by the internecine fighting. By the time Orwell’s recommendation for the International Column comes, the attack on the POUM in the Communist press is fully under way, and Orwell feels obligated to “tell [his Communist friend] that after this affair [he] could not join any Communist-controlled unit” (133). Though Orwell rarely mentions his interactions with Eileen in any detail, it is clear from even his brief descriptions that her suffering is inseparable from his own during their time at the Hotel Falcón. One example is when he mentions his wife, in passing, in a discussion of the lack of food at the hotel: “This shortage of food went on for several days after

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<sup>75</sup> Though this first mention occurring this late in the text is significant, it may not be as significant as it seems, for though Orwell came to Spain in late December 1936, Eileen did not leave for Spain until September 1937, having remained behind to settle the publication of *The Road to Wigan Pier*, which had been chosen for the Left Book Club (see Bowker 202-10).

the fighting was over. Three days running, I remember, my wife and I breakfasted off a little piece of goat's-milk cheese with no bread and nothing to drink. The only thing that was plentiful was oranges" (128). Though such statements hardly emphasize the event as reinforcing a strong interpersonal bond, at the very least, their experience at the Hotel Falcón provides Orwell and Eileen with a portion of the type of shared experience that so frequently forges camaraderie among soldiers in battle – such as that between Septimus and his late commanding officer, Evans, in *Mrs Dalloway*. This is especially important to note, for during the street-fighting, Eric and Eileen Blair were still newlyweds, and it is "[i]n this unpleasant climate of fear [following the May fighting that] he and Eileen passed their first wedding anniversary" (Bowker 221). Like an inverse policy of pin-pricks, this is one of a series of events that turns Orwell's subjectivity back towards his marriage, until his role as "husband" has overtaken that of "soldier," and his entire constellation of active subjectivities has been freed from subordination to his martial subjectivity.

The next transition in his liberation from martial subjectivity occurs when Orwell is shot. He and Eileen have discussed the possibility of his being wounded, and when he is, Orwell reflects that his wife is, in some sense, getting her way: "I felt a vague satisfaction. This ought to please my wife, I thought; she had always wanted me to be wounded, which would save me from being killed when the great battle came. It was only now that it occurred to me to wonder where I was hit, and how badly" (144). Though Orwell's ostensible sadism is often commented upon (for example, see Collini 79-81), his "vague satisfaction" is also vaguely sexual, with undertones of masochism: this is an oddly post-coital depiction of Orwell lying on the ground, personally satisfied that the results of the preceding event should please his wife. Yet, the source of the satisfaction, here, seems to be both the lack of pain and the resolution this provides to his

subjective bind, as he is now likely to be sanctioned by the military to return permanently into a domestic role. When he does begin to realize the seriousness of his injury, his “first thought, conventionally enough, [i]s for [his] wife” (145), and according to Bowker, when he was shot, Eric Blair “uttered what he probably thought would be his last words: ‘Tell Eileen that I love her’” (221). Though this is a conventional response to being wounded in a potentially mortal way, the power of convention – as Isa demonstrates when convention remains the only thing that makes her feel sympathetic to Giles in *Between the Acts* – is not to be underestimated, particularly when it comes to shaping perceptions of and assembly with one’s spouse.

Following his injury, Orwell does not mention Eileen again until he describes being transferred to a hospital, where he depicts his failure as a husband – albeit one that is not his fault. Amidst the rush to be loaded onto a bus headed to the train station, Orwell describes struggling “to send a wire to [his] wife, telling her that [he i]s coming” and thereby fulfilling a definite obligation, only to learn “when the train was actually starting that [... he is] not going to Barcelona after all, but to Tarragona” (150). Though he faces greater obstacles after the change of destinations is announced, Orwell manages to let his wife know he is being transferred, convincing the engineer “to hold up the train” so he can send a second telegram (150). As it turns out, however, the telegram never arrives, and the reader is never enlightened as to when he finally manages to get word to Eileen, for the narrative moves immediately to prolonged discussion of his injury, and then to the general atmosphere in Barcelona. Though Orwell is trying to behave as he believes a husband should, that role is still beyond his control because of the circumstances arising from his time at the front, his injury, and the realities of train service during the Spanish Civil War.

When it becomes clear that escaping the war will not be as easy as getting shot in the throat, the increased political persecution leads to an increased dependence on his marital subjectivity. Though Orwell remarks on the difference he feels when he receives his discharge – “I felt like a human being again, and also a little like a tourist” (164) – on returning to the hotel, Eileen makes it clear that he is in grave danger:

my wife was sitting in the lounge. She got up and came towards me in what struck me as a very unconcerned manner; then she put an arm round my neck and, with a sweet smile for the benefit of the other people in the lounge, hissed in my ear:

“*Get out!*”

“What?”

“Get out of here *at once!*” [...]

She had me by the arm and was already leading me towards the stairs. (165-6)

In this instance, Eileen must “explain [...] what happened while [he] was away” – namely, that “the POUM’s been suppressed. They’ve seized all the buildings. Practically everyone’s in prison. And they say they’re shooting people already” (166). This increases Orwell’s and the narrative’s dependence on Eileen, for both must now rely on her information and assessment of the situation. When he hesitates to leave the hotel, she leads him out by the arm, forcing a new mode of subjectivity onto him before an arresting officer has an opportunity to do so. Eileen’s affected nonchalance is necessary, for it is “fairly obvious that she [i]s being used as a decoy duck” (172) to catch Orwell, and is likely being observed.<sup>76</sup> But Eileen faces even greater personal danger as a result of her husband’s militia involvement, for at this time, “the police were adopting the trick (extensively used on both sides in this war) of seizing a man’s wife as a

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<sup>76</sup> This was, as it turns out, the case, and Eric and Eileen Blair were of great interest to at least one Soviet secret agent; see, for instance, Hitchens 67-8 and Bowker 216-20.



hostage if he disappeared” (167). In fact, as a document from a July 13, 1937, Tribunal of Espionage & High Treason shows, Eileen faced the same consequences as Eric (arrest and indefinite imprisonment, often a fatal sentence) as a result of her marriage: “ERIC BLAIR and his wife EILEEN BLAIR/Their correspondence reveals that they are rabid Trotskyites” (quoted in Bowker 227). Despite the impending danger Eileen faces, Orwell insists it is “obvious that it would be safer for my wife to stay at the hotel, at any rate for the time being. If she tried to disappear they would be after her immediately” (172).

When Orwell becomes exhausted with sleeping in the streets while Eileen remains a “decoy duck,” and recklessly decides to return to stay with her at the hotel, Eileen takes up an ideological/disciplinary role similar to that of the Lieutenant at the Lenin Barracks, and talks her husband into understanding and resigning himself to the course of action in which he really has no say: “My wife would not hear of it. Patiently she explained the state of affairs. It did not matter what I had done or not done. This was not a round-up of criminals; it was merely a reign of terror” (173). By this point, Eileen is the source of much of the information being presented, and clearly has a great deal of say in how they respond to the situation. When they visit his commanding officer, Georges Kopp, in prison, Eileen must even speak for her husband as his voice is so weak as a result of being shot in the throat that Orwell cannot “make [himself] heard in the din” (182). It is telling that Eileen, here, reverses the narrative circumstances present throughout *Homage*, as her husband speaks for her throughout the text. Though they are only in danger because Orwell decided to participate in the war, Eileen seems increasingly to be in charge of their response to the events that lead up to their exit from Spain, and by the time they return to England, Orwell’s marital subjectivity has become primary, enabling him to survive and escape the political consequences of his martial subjectivity.

But Orwell's marital subjectivity would not have been enough, on its own, to allow him to escape the continued persecution of the POUM; to make it out of Spain, Orwell would have to perform the role of well-to-do foreigner convincingly, and this is behaving according to the expectations of his class and national subjectivity. Having already gone underground by pretending to be a tourist by day while sleeping wherever he is able at night (189), when Orwell and Eileen leave Spain, it is "[t]he safest thing [...] to look as bourgeois as possible" (190). In the end, Orwell and Eileen are able to cross the frontier into France because their apparent class places them above suspicion: "Two detectives came round the train taking the names of foreigners, but when they saw us in the dining-car they seemed satisfied that we were respectable" (192). Orwell notes with irony that "[o]nly six months ago, when the Anarchists still reigned, it was looking like a proletarian that made you respectable" (192).

The text closes by shifting from the couple's bourgeois performance to their return to Englishness when Eileen and Orwell are finally able to reach England after spending time in France:

And then England – southern England, probably the sleekest landscape in the world. It is difficult when you pass that way [...] to believe that anything is really happening anywhere.[...] Down here it was still the England I had known in my childhood [...]; and then the huge peaceful wilderness of outer London, the barges on the miry river, the familiar streets, the posters telling of cricket matches and Royal weddings, the men in bowler hats, the pigeons in Trafalgar Square, the red buses, the blue policemen – all sleeping the deep, deep sleep of England, from which I sometimes fear that we shall never wake till we are jerked out of it by the roar of bombs. (196)

Critics frequently approach this passage by noting its ambivalent mixture of nostalgia and foreboding, which in many ways anticipates *Coming Up for Air* (1939). Though all of the things Orwell has known since his childhood have every appearance of being eternal, and Orwell and Eileen's return seems to be a return to peace, as Robert A. Lee states, their "return is at first a return to history [...]. But the concluding statement, foreshadowing the impending war, denies the past, as 'we' are 'jerked' from the sleep of historical continuity into a violent present" (81).<sup>77</sup> At the very least, Orwell's is a present that will become violent for the English in the near future. I would argue that both types of response, nostalgia and foreboding, mark a completed interpellation back into English subjectivity: on the one hand, the nostalgic joy of experiencing the peaceful landscape that Orwell has known since his childhood, which continues to sleep peacefully; on the other hand, its fragility and defencelessness to the horrors of the dangers to which it has not yet awakened. As J.R. Hammond suggests, "[i]t was partly for this reason – as an exposé of the forces of persecution and violence then rapidly growing in strength – the book was written" (140-1). Indeed, one mode of subjectivity demands the other, so that protecting his beloved homeland requires that Orwell make his fellow citizens aware of the dangers that are developing across the channel.

Nonetheless, *Homage to Catalonia* does not depict an overall a reduction in active modes of subjectivity, through which Orwell merely becomes a national subject. Orwell's sense of obligations to a variety of groups is clearer at the end than it is in the beginning, for he is not only a subject of England, but a member of the intellectual Left, a husband, a former soldier dedicated to the men he fought with in the POUM and their memory, and in particular, an advocate for his friend and former commanding officer, Georges Kopp. Far from depicting a

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<sup>77</sup> See also Woodcock, "Prose" 166; Hammond 140-1; Patai 157-8; Hitchens 120.

simplification in Orwell's subjectivity, *Homage to Catalonia* shows a process inverse to that depicted by Woolf in *Jacob's Room*: where Woolf's novel depicts the increased flattening of subjectivity, in *Homage*, Orwell comes out of this process alive and manages to return to a complex, multivalent subjectivity after he is nearly killed as a subject of the Spanish Civil War and struggles to be reintegrated into a variety of active communities.

On regaining multivalent subjectivity, having escaped the aggressively territorializing atmosphere of Republican Spain, Orwell immediately embarks on an attempt to re-code the events of the war by writing his personal memories as a way to undermine the coding of the inter-party politics underway in the press; Orwell's final novel, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, also emphasizes the importance of multivalent subjectivity, but warns of the impossibility of such subjectivity if totalitarian forces, such as those encountered in Spain, are able to become too powerful. Whereas Orwell's documentary is able to show the subject regaining modes of subjectivity that had been lost to martial subjectivity, the novel shows the fragility of multivalent subjectivity and the consequent need for protection.

### Isolation and Assemblage in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*

All these negative elements – defenses, censorship, denials – which the repressive hypothesis groups together in one great central mechanism destined to say no, are doubtless only component parts that have a local and tactical role to play in a transformation into discourse, a technology of power, and a will to knowledge that are far from being reducible to the former. (Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume I* 12)<sup>78</sup>

*The Last Man in Europe* – a title Orwell considered before deciding on *Nineteen Eighty-Four*<sup>79</sup> – refers to a crucial passage from the novel that occurs during Winston’s torture, a key scene in Orwell’s ongoing exploration of the relationship between individual and group. Where the title *Nineteen Eighty-Four* encapsulates the urgency of the text’s condemnation of repressive states, *The Last Man in Europe* draws on many issues and thematic concerns that are familiar from Orwell’s earlier writing and are central to his final novel. The title sets up Winston – or perhaps O’Brien (Rorty 145) – as the most recent or final inheritor of the European intellectual and political tradition, and it gestures towards historical progress more generally, even as it implies the termination of Europe. “Last” can also suggest solitude, and in this sense, the “Man” can be seen as occupying hostile territory, a “Europe” very different from the one we know, as well as embodying an opposition between part and whole. The emphasis on “Man” is a focus on human nature, and it draws attention to the question of what it is to be human. It also draws attention to questions of masculinity, and sex and gender more generally.

All of these issues are present in the scene from which the title *The Last Man in Europe* derives its significance. Faced with O’Brien’s explanation of the Party’s collective solipsism – which renders Winston’s memory and the rules of physical reality meaningless (279) – and O’Brien’s insistence that “the death of the individual is not death” because “the Party is

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<sup>78</sup> *L'Histoire de la sexualité I: La volonté de savoir* (1976).

<sup>79</sup> See Crick 582-5 for a detailed account of the process that led to Orwell titling the novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

immortal,” Winston argues that there is “some spirit, some principle” that the party “will never overcome,” which he tentatively calls “[t]he spirit of Man” (282). This, too, sets part and whole against one another, for O’Brien compares the party’s longevity to the individual’s, while drawing attention to a disagreement over the nature of humanity itself. He disputes Winston’s assertion of the indomitability of human nature by responding, “[i]f you are a man, Winston, you are the last man” (282), a retort that gains weight through O’Brien’s use of “man” to refer not just to a human being, but to sarcastically draw on the gendered meaning of “man.” This sarcasm emasculates Winston, the helpless victim of the torture, and O’Brien reiterates his point – minus the telling, conditional “if,” now replaced by increased sarcasm – as Winston is released from the torture apparatus: “You are the last man [...]. You are the guardian of the human spirit. You shall see yourself as you are. Take off your clothes” (283). Forcing Winston to stand naked “between the wings of the mirror” so that he will “see the side view as well” (283), O’Brien repeats the phrase a final time: “You are rotting away [...]. What are you? A bag of filth.[...] Do you see that thing facing you? That is the last man. If you are human, that is humanity. Now put your clothes on again” (285). O’Brien’s disgust with the degradation he has, himself, imposed on Winston emphasizes this treatment as a form of sexual assault, and whether or not Winston really is the “last” according to his own vague definition, it would seem that he could scarcely be more alone. At this point, Orwell writes that “O’Brien laid a hand on his shoulder, almost kindly” (285), one of many moments in the novel that draw attention to the modes of homosociality promoted in Oceania.

Set after the triumph of totalitarianism at home, Winston’s torment between the panels of a mirror concludes the physical torture Winston has been forced to endure in the Ministry of Love. A horrific version of the “Present Time. Ourselves” section of Miss La Trobe’s pageant in

*Between the Acts*, the mirror Winston faces defeats ontological constructs by forcing the subject to recognize the absurdity of his very existence. But whereas the mirror scene in *Between the Acts* generates something approaching primordial unity, Winston's experience in front of the mirror causes profound despair, and it is the last stage of his physical and psychological torture before he is built up to a sufficient level that it is worth defeating him finally in Room 101.<sup>80</sup>

Rather than instilling Winston with a profound feeling that he is part of the universe in a way that is prior to discourse and defies rational meaning, this passage depicts an attempt to shatter Winston's version of reality so that it can be replaced with the Party's.

Using this episode as a demarcation point, where several of the issues present converge and become relevant to an assemblage-based approach to *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, I will argue the Party's utilization of temporal and spatial scale to gain and keep power over the citizens of Oceania echoes the operations of history and memory in this state, where the implications of scale and modes of remembrance for individual subjectivity inform the modes of isolation that O'Brien enacts here upon Winston. The repression of sex in Oceania, both in terms of the isolation and the types of subjectivity that the Party produces, has an important interpellative function in its technologies of power. An examination of gendered groups in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* suggests that it is the mode of homosocial conflict on display in the overlapping relationships between Julia and Winston, and Winston and O'Brien that leads to Winston's torture, degradation, and final defeat in Room 101 as he is finally interpellated into Big Brother's homosocial order. Though the implications of Winston's defeat signal, at best, ambivalence, the novel's utilization of inter-war collective memory sets up Winston's fall as a real-world call to action against forces like those Orwell encountered in Republican Spain, which consolidate

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<sup>80</sup> As John Newsinger argues, "Smith is destroyed [...] by means of torture. While the rat cage is what most readers remember, it is the electric-shock treatment that eventually affects his brain and robs him of his will" (129).

power by stripping it from individuals and protect it by eliminating those registers of subjectivity which do not serve Party ends.

### Isolation

As with *Homage to Catalonia*, the differences between the Party's longer temporal view and the time-scales of individuals challenge subjects, particularly in their attempts to identify and resist exercises of repressive authority. O'Brien explains to Winston, "always there will be the intoxication of power, constantly increasing and constantly growing subtler" (280). The state's perpetual and incremental increase of power is reminiscent of the policy of pin-pricks described in *Homage to Catalonia* in that the Party is able to siphon more and more power away from individuals with changes taking place over such a long period that no one increase in power ever seems significant.<sup>81</sup> This system is intrinsically oppositional in nature, but also asymmetrical: the assertion that "the weaker the opposition, the tighter the despotism" (281) suggests that the more citizens may be bothered by the loss of a particular liberty, the less power they will have to be able to do anything about it. Whether or not such a system can be sustained eternally, it is indeed conceived as immortal to the point that O'Brien is confident that "Goldstein and his heresies will live for ever. Every day, at every moment, they will be defeated, discredited, ridiculed, spat upon and yet they will always survive" (281). One question O'Brien's belief raises is whether Inner Party members such as O'Brien merely take for granted that their rule is immortal because it is currently absolute, like the Thousand Year Reich, or whether the Party is actually undertaking policies on that scale.<sup>82</sup> The timetable for subsequent editions of the newspeak dictionary shows

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<sup>81</sup> It is clear in a March 1944 edition of "As I Please" that Orwell believes limiting perception of existence to the individual lifespan increases the threat of totalitarianism: "There is little doubt that the modern cult of power-worship is bound up with the modern man's feeling that life here and now is the only life there is. If death ends everything, it becomes much harder to believe that you can be in the right even if you are defeated" (*Essays* 557).

<sup>82</sup> Goldstein's book actually echoes Nazi propaganda when it insists that "the Party has been able – and may, for all we know, continue to be able for thousands of years – to arrest the course of history" (223).



plans for publication to at least 2050 (55-6, 312; see also Yeo 60). The Party's relentless manipulation of history also generates "a sense of its own timelessness" (Gottlieb 92), so that it appears to exist on a time-scale even larger than it really does, and likely appears too large and long-lived for its defeat to seem possible. Resistance thus seems futile, whether or not that is the case; for while the Party's belief in its immortality is likely false, there is little doubt that it is able to outlast a given individual.<sup>83</sup>

The Party's imposition of a supposedly permanent totalitarianism is rooted in their control of history and manipulation of memory as ways to shift power from individuals to the Party by eliminating the individual's access to any alternative ways to code the events of their daily lives. This is the reason that "[t]he antagonism between the totalitarian state and the concept of historical time" (Gottlieb 87) is of central importance to *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, as it is to several of Orwell's earlier works.<sup>84</sup> As Goldstein's book explains, "Past events, it is argued, have no objective existence, but survive only in written records and in human memories. The past is whatever the records and the memories agree upon. And since the Party is in full control of all records and in equally full control of the minds of its members, it follows that the past is whatever the Party chooses to make it" (222). More than merely redirecting history by gradually shifting discourse, as in *Homage to Catalonia*, INGSOC is free to modify all historical documents to change history radically at a moment's notice. In the short term, this seems like a somewhat pointless endeavor, for though written accounts may agree on what happened, nobody is likely to believe such an account, knowing how implausible it is. As we see in relation to Julia,

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<sup>83</sup> As Lifton points out, contrasting individual mortality and Party immortality is a common totalitarian strategy used as a way to isolate individuals from any sense of larger temporal continuity (219). This choice is similar to Winston's during O'Brien's interrogation: become one with the Party and live forever, or be an individual and cease to exist (*Nineteen* 251-73).

<sup>84</sup> Gottlieb argues that this antagonism, which "had been a theme on Orwell's mind for many years," only finds "full literary expression" (87) in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

though, such indifference to party propaganda allows bits of its account to sneak into the consciousness: “Often she was ready to accept the official mythology [...]. She believed, for instance, having learnt it at school, that the Party had invented aeroplanes” (160). It is true, then, that Winston’s “age takes on a thematic significance,” though the reason is not only that “[t]he next generation simply cannot envision life without the Party” (Phelan 102), but also that the next generation’s life-long and absolute immersion in Party doctrine has not given them access to any alternate version of the past.

Whereas immersion in the Party’s version of events thus shapes collective memory, the threat of individual memory is neutralized by disciplinary structures, which make it impossible to generate shared accounts by making it impossible to articulate memories that disagree with the Party’s account. It is the role of surveillance and discipline in the text that makes such discrepancies impossible. As Harry Strub insists, “[t]he purpose of surveillance” in Orwell’s final novel is “the same as Bentham intended for his Panopticon penitentiary – to produce the complete obedience to the governing authority” (40). What individuals actually remember is shown to be unimportant, for the content of individual minds is acknowledged to exist no more than any other event that has been written out of history. The fact that individual minds are brought into alignment with party doctrine in the Ministry of Love – for, as Michael Yeo has argued, “[s]urreptitious surveillance [...] will detect unorthodoxy in people like Winston and Julia who are good at playing to the camera” (58) – does not suggest an interaction of memory and history, with an ontologically valid “past” existing where the two agree. Rather, it points to an absolute subordination of memory to a perpetually changing party dogma that is referred to as “history,” for where memories fail to correspond with the Party’s version of history, the memory is assumed to be evidence of criminality and is purged with psychologically intrusive tortures

such as classic conditioning and what can, in this instance, only euphemistically be referred to as “electroconvulsive therapy.”

The dominance of such disciplinary technologies does not speak primarily to the Party’s celebrated ability to control thought, but its ability to control discourse as a result of so completely territorializing Party members (the exteriority of their relations is nonexistent, for any other groups they are members of are nested in their Party membership) and of so completely overcoding reality (everything is either evidence of the Party’s just rule or the subject’s criminality, demonstrated by not recognizing the rightness of the Party’s logic). Though Goldstein’s book, asserting an element of INGSOC doctrine as dubious as it is foundational, suggests that the Party enjoys “full control of the minds of its members” (222), there are also clues that the Party’s quotidian methods of mind control are not as successful as they are said to be, and that Oceania’s citizens may not be able to avoid thoughts and memories not in line with Party dogma. The novel raises this possibility by noting Julia’s belief “that everyone, or nearly everyone, secretly hate[s] the Party and would break the rules if he thought it safe to do so” (159). Winston comes close to agreeing with Julia’s position even before he meets her, as is shown when he considers which of his acquaintances will eventually be arrested by the Thought Police and executed: “Mrs Parsons would be vaporized. Syme would be vaporized. Winston would be vaporized. O’Brien would be vaporized. Parsons, on the other hand, would never be vaporized” (64). The fact that even Parsons – who swallows Party lies “easily, with the stupidity of an animal” (62) and who seems to be the ideal outer party member – is eventually arrested for thoughtcrimes (244-6) suggests not only that anyone can be persecuted for being a thought criminal, but also that anyone could *be* a thought criminal, and therefore, using the Party’s logic,

everyone is.<sup>85</sup> Strikingly, it is impossible to say whether or not everyone is a thought criminal because of the profound isolation that results from the Party's use of perpetual surveillance, its manipulation of fact, and its requirement of absolute orthodoxy.

This isolation is partly temporal and a result of the perpetual synchrony that results from the Party's manipulation of history. As Lynette Hunter notes, Winston's London "has no past and no future" and as a consequence, Winston "sees London in an entirely foreign way" (193) – though this synchrony is by no means limited to the local scale, and shapes his entire worldview.<sup>86</sup> Winston's attempt to overcome the personal crisis caused by the imposition of a permanent synchrony is the driving force of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, for the novel's inciting incident is his decision "[t]o mark the paper" of the diary he purchases at Charrington's shop (8). This is framed as "the decisive act," for it inscribes his criminality and – if he is caught – ensures a sentence of at least "twenty-five years in a forced-labour camp," and possibly a death sentence (8). Despite the risk, Winston writes in his diary because it "serves to diminish the *ex nihilo* feeling which arises from the destruction of history" (Carter 184) and because "in using it as a diary, the resumption of authentic time is marked" (185). The fact that the first decisive moment in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* arises from Winston's desire to overcome the isolation produced by a continually revised history suggests that the battle against this synchronic state – as well as the *ex nihilo* subjective state it produces – is one of the novel's central conflicts.

Overcoming the isolation produced by perpetual synchrony is no easy task, though, for Winston is shown also to suffer as a result of his discursive isolation, which prevents him from

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<sup>85</sup> And as critics frequently note, oppressive totalitarian regimes such as Oceania's are much better at making citizens perform in accordance with their assigned roles than they are in actually making them think in a particular way (see Strub 45, 52; Zimbardo 207-8).

<sup>86</sup> As Joseph Adelson puts it, "[t]he rewriting of history destroys any sense of the past, and with it the sense of personal continuity" (117).

creating an account of the past that satisfactorily counters the Party's. The isolation created by the inaccessibility of others' memories and beliefs is gestured at by Winston's difficulty imagining an audience to whom he could possibly be writing: "For whom, it suddenly occurred to him to wonder, was he writing this diary?[...] Either the future would resemble the present, in which case it would not listen to him: or it would be different from it, and his predicament would be meaningless" (9). Winston's inability to imagine a suitable audience for his writing indicates the fundamental problem that makes a perfect hermeneutics impossible even under ideal circumstances. The questions Alan Kennedy poses in response to this quotation – "Are we, as readers, the future, or the past? Either way, is it possible to comprehend *1984*?" (79) – could be asked of any written text that has the intent of communicating a particular message, for there is always a discursive gap between writer and reader – even if they are the same person – because the act of writing begins to reform one's discursive constellations.

But the difficulty communicating in Oceania is more than is ordinarily the case, for Winston is hampered by discursive isolation beyond that intrinsic to all interactions. This is hinted at by Winston's attempt to discuss history with an anachronistic elderly proletarian man who seems surprised to find out that nobody refers to "pints" any longer, as they have been replaced by the litre and the half-litre (91). Winston wants to speak with this man in the hope that he can supplement his personal memories by confirming the extent to which the Party's version of history is in accordance with the actual past. Though Winston concludes from their conversation that the few people who are old enough to remember life before INGSOC remember "a million useless things [...]" but all the relevant facts [a]re outside of the range of their vision" (96), the elderly man actually provides Winston with answers to many of his most pressing questions. His observation that "the beer was better" (92) suggests conditions have

degraded rather than improving after the revolution. The man's observation that he once wore a top-hat for a funeral, though it "was only 'ired for the occasion" (93) reveals that, rather than being part of "the uniform of the capitalists" which "no one else was allowed to wear" (76), as the children's history textbook claims, the top hat could be worn by members of any class, though they may only be likely to do so on important occasions such as funerals. His insistence that there was once a man who would speak in Hyde Park on Sunday afternoons to castigate "'[l]ackeys of the bourgeoisie! Flunkies of the ruling class!' Parasites[...]. And 'yenas – 'e definitely called 'em 'yenas," words he was using to refer "to the Labour Party, you understand" (94) reveals not only possible origins of INGSOC, but also that the term "lackey" was not strictly restricted for men who were employed to accompany capitalists. The man's decision to refer to "the people at the top" as "[t]he 'Ouse of Lords" (94), which Winston seems to mistake as a mere imposition of an unusual colloquialism, hints at the limits of the power of capitalists, *per se*, and the elderly man's revelation that capitalists "liked you to touch your cap to 'em" (95) implies that it is an exaggeration to say that "you had to call them 'sir' and take off your cap when you passed them" (94). Finally, his story about the one time a wealthy man pushed him – to which, when it occurred, he responded by threatening the man, saying, "[y]ou're drunk. I'll give you charge in 'alf a minute" (95), and which nearly ended with the working-class man throwing a punch – clearly undermines the version Winston has taken from history books, which asserts that it was not unusual for capitalists "and their servants to push [people who were not wealthy] off the pavement into the gutter" (95). Far from implying that Winston "is wise enough to see that the fragmentary memories of the old man [...] prove nothing" (Rae 210), this passage highlights the extent to which Winston's particular discursive constellations isolate him from the answers to his questions, for he lacks a perspective that will allow him to see the significance of

the catalogue of relevant information the elderly man provides. If this degree of separation can exist in a dialogue with someone alive at the same time as Winston, Orwell signals the profound difficulty of communicating with a future that either is unimaginably different discursively, having rid itself of Party rule, or has further developed newspeak.

While Winston's isolation is thus grounded in his inability to form a discursive community in which all of its members code reality in the same way and similarly reject the Party's version of reality, it is also hampered by the limits of his own memories and his own account of reality. The attempt to overcome some of these limitations while recovering half-lost memories forms one of the novel's primary narrative strands. Early in the novel, as Winston considers the view of "London, chief city of Airstrip One, itself the third most populous of the provinces of Oceania" (5), he longs to construct a narrative to account for the desolation before him, but is unable to remember for certain whether the city has ever been otherwise:

He tried to squeeze out some childhood memory that should tell him whether London had always been quite like this. Were there always these vistas of rotting nineteenth-century houses, their sides shored up with baulks of timber, their windows patched with cardboard and their roofs with corrugated iron, their crazy garden walls sagging in all directions? And the bombed sites where the plaster dust swirled in the air and the willow-herb straggled over the heaps of rubble[...]? But it was no use, he could not remember: nothing remained of his childhood except a series of bright-lit tableaux occurring against no background and mostly unintelligible. (5)

The words "squeeze out" render Winston's mental struggle physical, a form of mnemonic constipation, though the dramatic irony<sup>87</sup> is here almost palpable, for the passage functions

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<sup>87</sup> For a more detailed discussion of dramatic irony in this passage and in *1984* more broadly, see Hunter 193.

expositionally, establishing the scene as a clear dystopian landscape and emphasizing the depth of Winston's lack. At the same time, the image of "bombed sites where the plaster dust swirled in the air" draws on a collective memory of WWII London. In such a way, the passage presents an evocative view of London that is at once horrific, historic, and possible. A version of George Bowling from *Coming Up for Air* who is alienated from his home but unable to remember for certain that home has ever been different, Winston feels that his experiences would allow him to know for certain whether this present London is consistent with the London of his childhood if only he could remember them.

Winston's attempt to supplement his own imperfect memory with the memories of others to generate a coherent account of reality points to the extent to which subjectivity is shaped by relationships and to the internal discursive void left by isolation. Tellingly, Winston does partially manage to overcome his discursive and interpersonal isolation through his relationship with Julia, a fact that suggests the connection between memory, shared discourse, and revolutionary action – even though this connection occurs on too small a scale to bring about meaningful revolutionary change. For most of the novel, crucial memories are repressed, and they emerge only symbolically in dreams that Winston can frequently not remember. Hence, he can overcome his entrapping synchrony only by slowly recovering his memories. Early in the novel, for example, Winston is unable to remember what he has just been dreaming, though he knows when he wakes that it concerns his mother and sister, and that it suggests "in some way the lives of his mother and sister had been sacrificed to his own" (32). Tellingly, the novel's free indirect discourse suggests that Winston's memories are likely repressed where they mark the termination of his subjectivity as a family member before being wholly defined by his INGSOC membership: "His mother's memory tore at his heart because she had died loving him, when he



was too young and selfish to love her in return” (32). Despite this repression, Winston’s memory of mother has taken on symbolic significance and has come to represent something important that has been lost, for he knows that “somehow, he did not remember how, she had sacrificed herself to a conception of loyalty that was private and unalterable” (32).

Winston’s last memory of his mother and sister is only finally recovered when Winston is able to retrieve a portion of this private loyalty in the room he rents with Julia – a fact that emphasizes the link between overcoming internal and external discursive limitations. Waking next to Julia, the repressed dream becomes available to his conscious mind, and Winston realizes that it is “a memory that he must have deliberately pushed out of his consciousness over many years” (167-8). The story of Winston stealing his starving sister’s chocolate ration and running off indicates why Winston feels guilty and why he associates his mother with “private and unalterable” loyalty: “His sister, conscious of having been robbed of something, had set up a feeble wail. His mother drew her arm round the child and pressed its face against her breast. Something in the gesture told him that his sister was dying. He turned and fled” (170). The emotional and physical connection represented in his mother’s act provides Winston with a powerful model of love and loyalty: “when you had nothing else to give, you still gave [...] love. When the last of the chocolate was gone, his mother had clasped the child in her arms. It was no use, it changed nothing, [...] but it seemed natural to her to do it” (172). As Anne Mellor explains, “such pure, altruistic, maternal love cannot survive in the world of Oceania.[...] There is no room for the life-nurturing, pacifistic love of a mother in the sadistic, militaristic society” (118). His mother’s “private and unalterable” loyalty makes such an impression on Winston, though, that recalling it in bed beside Julia leads him to suggest that they should, for Julia’s safety, stop seeing one another (173). After she declares her loyalty to Winston, despite the

consequences (173-4), Julia and Winston both agree that their love is unalterable, for even through torture, the Thought Police “could not alter your feelings” (174). The fact that the next chapter opens with Julia and Winston standing before O’Brien in an attempt to join the Brotherhood suggests that the version of love and loyalty Winston’s mother inspires is powerful enough to make the lovers agree to risk their lives in a gesture to preserve it. The final destructive act that occurs in Room 101 is nothing less than Winston’s forced betrayal of this memory of emotional, personal connection when he betrays Julia. Clearly, the Party’s interest in eliminating love and interpersonal loyalty suggests the importance of overcoming isolation if one hopes to oppose the Party, for shared understanding and shared values can lead to shared action.

That a sexual relationship leads Winston and Julia to generate a shared understanding of reality, and therefore enables revolutionary activity, would seem to suggest that sexuality is primarily important as a means to generating interpersonal relationships that can enable them to form shared accounts of reality; this reading cannot fully explain the Party’s prohibition of unauthorized sexual relationships between party members, though. In fact, the novel is repeatedly adamant on this point, and the narrator even explains, “The aim of the Party was not merely to prevent men and women from forming loyalties which it might not be able to control. Its real, undeclared purpose was to remove all pleasure from the sexual act” (68). The most probable alternative explanation for the Party’s sexual policy that the text directly provides suggests that sexual sublimation redirects repressed sexual desire as love of Big Brother and hatred of his enemies. As Julia explains, “They want you to be bursting with energy all the time. All this marching up and down and cheering and waving flags is simply sex gone sour” (139).<sup>88</sup> That “sex gone sour” could be turned into political hysteria certainly seems plausible considering

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<sup>88</sup> Goldstein’s book makes a similar argument (220).

the narrator's suggestion that "[t]he horrible thing about the Two Minutes Hate [i]s not that one [i]s obliged to act a part, but, on the contrary, that it [i]s impossible to avoid joining in" because in a matter of seconds, the hate succeeds at creating a "hideous ecstasy of fear and vindictiveness [...] which could be switched from one object to another like the flame of a blowlamp" (16).

The "sex gone sour" thesis goes some way towards explaining the flash of horrific misogyny Winston experiences towards Julia when swept up in the hate, which includes a desire to commit a litany of horrendously violent acts (sexual and otherwise) to Julia, including a desire to "ravish her and cut her throat at the moment of climax" (17). The only climax the Party will allow is not sexual, but a release of hostility and an experience of relief upon Big Brother's arrival on the screen: "The Hate rose to its climax.[...] The figure of a Eurasian soldier [...] seemed to be advancing.[...] But in the same moment, drawing a deep sigh of relief from everybody, the hostile figure melted into the face of Big Brother" (17-8). Obviously, this suggests a connection between repressed sexuality, violence, and a redirection of sexual energy towards Big Brother.

There is another explanation for the Party's prohibition of free sexual activity, though, that is not presented by one of the characters in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*: that the party uses sex as a way to get outer party members to think of themselves as, and thereby become, criminals – in an extreme case of Althusserian interpellation where the subject literally becomes a criminal by turning. This account would suggest that the Party uses sexuality as a territorializing technology: it recognizes and attempts to foster INGSOC/party member oppositionality to increase pressure on Party members to *seem* to be like all of the other party members. As in Foucault's account of the Victorians, Oceania frequently "speaks verbosely of its own silence" (*History* 8) and uses technologies that "have a local and tactical role to play in a transformation into discourse [...], technolog[ies] of power, and a will to knowledge that are far from being reducible to the former"

(12). That Oceania's sexual taboos seem designed to speak of their own silence to produce technologies of power is suggested by the final reason provided in the description of Winston's motives for wanting to do various horrific things to Julia: "because round her sweet supple waist, which seemed to ask you to encircle it with your arm, there was only the odious scarlet sash, aggressive symbol of chastity" (17). The novel's initial description of Julia also speaks to the sexuality that is advertised, and thus the thoughts that are encouraged, even as both must be disavowed: "She was a bold-looking girl, of about twenty-seven, with thick hair, a freckled face, and swift, athletic movements. A narrow scarlet sash, emblem of the Junior Anti-Sex League, was wound several times round the waist of her overalls, just tightly enough to bring out the shapeliness of her hips" (11-2). Though Paul Robinson insists, "Freud would call this 'the return of the repressed'" (150), the sexuality suggested by the anti-sex uniform may not be escaping the Party's repression of sexuality, but may be an important technology of power. The scarlet sash simultaneously renders sex discursive (by signifying anti-sex) and stimulates sexual desire (by drawing the eye) while insisting on sex's wickedness and reinforcing its social prohibition. From this perspective, the Anti-Sex League's uniform is sexual not *despite* the fact that it might trigger thoughtcrime – at least insofar as it demands an expert utilization of doublethink to avoid thoughtcrime when experiencing sexual attraction – but *because* it triggers thoughtcrime.

The possibility that the Party is tricking subjects into internalizing criminality to get them to behave as loyal subjects is further suggested by Orwell's repetition of the assertion, "We are the dead," which shows Winston taking for granted his criminality and its inevitable consequences. The phrase makes its first appearance, albeit in a modified form, when Winston writes in his journal, "[t]houghtcrime does not entail death: thoughtcrime IS death" (30), after which the narrator explains, "[n]ow that he had recognized himself as a dead man it became

important to stay alive as long as possible” (30). At this stage, Winston has already internalized the idea that he is a thought criminal and consequently an enemy of INGSOC, and has accepted that because the party always catches and defeats its enemies, he will be caught in time, too. The repeated phrase is first uttered verbatim by the consistently fatalistic Winston, as he explains to Julia his feelings of hopelessness, though she, at this point, responds with a refusal to accept his statement: “We’re not dead yet” (142). He pushes the point – “Obviously we shall put it off as long as we can. But it makes very little difference” (142) – but once again, Julia responds, “Oh, rubbish!” (142), refusing to accept the defeatism that comes with declaring oneself an enemy of INGSOC. Usage of the phrase increasingly corresponds with Winston and Julia’s participation in explicitly criminal activities, and it is next uttered by O’Brien when he explains to Winston and Julia what their lives as agents of the Brotherhood will be like: “You will work for a while, you will be caught, you will confess, and then you will die [...]. There is no possibility that any perceptible change will happen within our own lifetime. We are the dead. Our only true life is in the future” (183). Though neither Winston nor Julia respond to the phrase when O’Brien uses it, both utter it in the next chapter immediately before their arrest, and it marks not only their final interpellation into the Brotherhood, but also, and as a consequence, their final internalization of their role as opponents to INGSOC:

“We are the dead,” he said.

“We are the dead,” echoed Julia dutifully.

“You are the dead,” said an iron voice behind them.

They sprang apart. (230)

Though Carter argues that, in the Ministry of Love, O’Brien “cultivat[es] in Smith the feeling that he is responsible for a sin which *demand*s punishment” (209), Winston has accepted this as a

fact before he is arrested, as has Julia. Indeed, their arrest immediately follows a statement that asserts this acceptance, suggesting the possibility that such internalization is a prerequisite for arrest: auto-criminalization, or their voluntary assumption of themselves as the just targets of the Party's repressive technologies, is part of the Party's programme. Auto-criminalization is one of the Party's reasons for endlessly advertising the impossibility of enjoyable sexuality.

### **Gendered Assemblage**

It is difficult to discuss Oceania's strict regulation of sex without considering assemblages as explicitly gendered, though, for Big Brother's totalitarian state is based on institutionalized homosocial relationships that result in significant differences between Orwell's England and Big Brother's Oceania. On the whole, Oceania retains a firmly patriarchal social structure. For instance, the ostensible leader of the state is Big Brother, a hyper-masculine figure whose image is "an amalgam of Stalin and Kitchener" (Meyers 141) – a fact that has led one critic to go so far as to argue, "Oceania is the complete triumph of a patriarchal culture, a fascist society in which the man with the most machismo, the older and stronger brother, reigns forever" (Mellor 117). In fact, all the positions of power are occupied by men, while, as Patai suggests, the women are presented as occupying stereotypically feminine roles: "They are Party secretaries, Party fanatics, Party wives like Katharine or the stereotypically helpless housewife Mrs Parsons. They are also antisex freaks or prole prostitutes" (242-3; see also Mellor 117). Given the familiarity of this patriarchal social structure, one might expect to find a system that also depicts the commodification and homosocial exchange of women in ways similar to critiques of gender in western civilization.<sup>89</sup> Considering *Nineteen Eighty-Four* from such a

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<sup>89</sup> I am thinking, here, of the critical tradition following Marx's studies of political economy and ideology and Claude Lévi-Strauss's study of kinship – in which the exchange of women between tribes ensures peace by maintaining extended familial bonds between tribes – at work in texts such as Luce Irigaray's *This Sex Which Is Not One* (1977), which discusses exchange in terms of more or less metaphorically 'homosexual' relationships.

perspective, two things become clear: first, *Oceania* would be difficult to analyze using Eve Sedgwick's model because the particularly oppressive prohibition of unauthorized sexual activity combined with the elevated phallogocentrism of Oceania – as P. Robinson has noted, all must love Big Brother (152-4), and Big Brother is attributed with the ability to determine the fundamental nature of reality in a way usually reserved for omnipotent deities – work together to generate a society that has dispensed with the need to use women to mediate male/male relationships; and second, that the *plot* of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* would be relatively easy to analyze using Sedgwick's model, for although it has been argued that “[t]he romance between Julia and Winston is far less important in the novel, and occupies less space, than the ‘romance’ between Winston and O’Brien” (Patai 239), the Winston/Julia romance is still used to enable the Winston/O’Brien “romance” in the Ministry of Love. In other words, I would argue that Oceania's dispensation with female mediation of male/male relationships in Oceania and the seemingly paradoxical indispensability of such mediation to the novel itself makes Sedgwick's model ideal for considering gendered assemblage in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*: it enables viewing the Winston/Julia relationship as a threat to the Party because the relationship upsets the prevalent homosociality of Big Brother's state. The disruption generated by Julia's mediation of a homosocial relationship creates a larger order assemblage that is only dissolved when Winston is tortured in the Ministry of Love.

Initially, the depictions of Winston and O'Brien blur the boundaries between social and sexual, emphasizing the predominant homosociality of Oceania. For example, O'Brien's

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Similarly, Gayle Rubin's "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex," proposes that the term "sex/gender system" be used in place of "patriarchy," and argues that our current society transforms men into capitalists, women into commodities. However, I'm most explicitly relying on Eve Sedgwick's *Between Men*. Here, Sedgwick suggests that all same-sex relationships exist on "a continuum between homosocial and homosexual" (1-2), and argues that, in attempts to bar homosexuality in male/male relationships, women have frequently been used as intermediaries between men, enabling male/male relationships that are not explicitly sexual.

invitation could easily be read as an invitation to an illicit sexual rendezvous: “They had been talking to one another for a couple of minutes at the most. There was only one meaning that the episode could possibly have. It had been contrived as a way of letting Winston know O’Brien’s address” (166). Though Winston assumes that O’Brien is giving Winston his address because of political unorthodoxy (13, 176), Winston is so frequently shown to be inept in his determinations that his interpretation here proves little. The language describing their encounter is suggestively consistent with a description of sexual desire: “At last they were face to face, and [...] his only impulse was to run away. His heart bounded violently [...]. O’Brien, however, had continued forward in the same movement, laying a friendly hand for a moment on Winston’s arm, so that the two of them were walking side by side” (164). Both O’Brien’s initiation of physical contact, and Winston’s excitement – his bounding heart, and his impulse to run away, though he wants nothing more than to remain – suggest a sexual element to this encounter.<sup>90</sup> The fact that O’Brien is described as approaching and contacting Winston in a single movement echoes Winston’s dream of Julia as tearing off her clothing in a single movement (33) – a sexually charged act that suggests “Big Brother and the Party and the Thought Police could all be swept into nothingness by a single splendid movement of the arm” (33) – which is realized in their first sexual encounter in the Golden Country (131). It is largely in line with such evidence that Jeffrey Meyers refers to O’Brien and Winston’s relationship in terms of “the [novel’s] homosexual theme” (143), for it is possible that Winston is correct about his bond with O’Brien but not about its source. Even O’Brien’s eventual torture of Winston does not desexualize this relationship, for in Room 101,

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<sup>90</sup> See P. Robinson 156 for a compatible reading of this passage.



“Winston and O’Brien forge a symbiotic bond” (Zwerdling 101), and Winston’s torture is often consistent with a “pattern of sadistic action and masochistic response” (102).<sup>91</sup>

Winston and Julia’s trip to O’Brien’s home (175) highlights the ambiguously social/sexual attraction between Winston and O’Brien, for Julia’s presence mediates the male/male relationship, rendering it firmly social in a way consistent with Sedgwick’s model. Winston and Julia are seeking a way to join the Brotherhood, as this could furnish them with membership in a larger-scale assemblage than their own romance and ground their rebellion in a larger community. But when Winston sees O’Brien’s reaction to their arrival, he thinks he has understood O’Brien’s invitation incorrectly: “his expression was grimmer than usual, as though he were not pleased at being disturbed [... and] it seemed to [Winston] quite possible that he had simply made a stupid mistake” (176). After all, Winston’s only evidence that O’Brien does not believe in Party doctrine is “a flash of the eyes and a single equivocal remark” (176), both of which could also indicate that O’Brien is interested in a sexual relationship. If this were the case, O’Brien’s response to their arrival would not be surprising, as Julia’s presence would make it clear Winston’s intentions are not only heteronormative, but also overtly treasonous. When O’Brien approaches Winston and Julia, he and Winston stare into one another’s eyes for a moment before O’Brien’s expression warms: “suddenly the grim face broke down into what might have been the beginnings of a smile. With his characteristic gesture O’Brien resettled his spectacles on his nose” (177). The fact that O’Brien’s expression remains grim after he turns off the telescreen may suggest that his expression is not merely part of an act. Though Winston realizes that Martin’s – O’Brien’s servant – “whole life is playing a part” (178), the same could

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<sup>91</sup> For examples of critics who have reached similar conclusions by other means, see also Kennedy (92-3), Patai (227), Sunstein (236), and Hunter (199).

true of any citizen of Oceania, and it is possible that O'Brien's grimness is authentic and his joviality a performance, not vice versa.

As Winston and Julia begin repeating a catechism to mark their membership in "the Brotherhood" with O'Brien asking a series of questions about which horrible acts Winston and Julia are willing to undertake, the two men seem to take it for granted that the relationship functions in accordance with a stereotypically patriarchal homosocial relationship: "O'Brien had turned himself a little in his chair so that he was facing Winston. He almost ignored Julia, seeming to take it for granted that Winston could speak for her" (179). O'Brien's ignoring Julia suggests that, to this point, she has been functioning as an otherwise marginal participant who only disrupts the male/male relationship enough to neutralize potential sexuality. Julia's role in this assemblage changes, though, when O'Brien asks, "you are prepared [...] to separate and never see one another again?" (180). While O'Brien seems to expect Winston to answer for himself and Julia both, he this time receives an answer from Julia – an emphatic "No!" (180). Winston flounders as he contemplates his response: "For a moment he seemed even to have been deprived of the power of speech.[...] Until he had said it, he did not know which word he was going to say. 'No,' he said finally" (180). Comparing Julia's interruption to the conflict between Oceania, Eurasia, and Eastasia, Patai suggests provocatively that, "As in the eternal wars among the three powers, the means are always the same and the rules agreed on; all that changes is the identity of the opponent" (231). I would argue, on the contrary, that Julia's interruption fundamentally changes the rules of this three-member assemblage, for it shows that she is not merely marginal and subject to the decisions made by the men, but is instrumental to the group's decision making. That Winston is momentarily "deprived of speech" is revealing, for like Eileen's speaking for her wounded husband in *Homage to Catalonia, Nineteen Eighty-Four*

parallels Julia's assertion of speech and agency with the loss of Winston's. Julia's speech also forces a new structure onto the group, so that instead of the conversation really being between the men, it becomes, to some extent, a conversation between Julia and O'Brien, who become opponents in a competition for Winston's loyalty, rendering Winston the object of Julia and O'Brien's mutual desire.

This apparent competition between Julia and O'Brien is only resolved in the Ministry of Love, where Winston's betrayal of Julia eliminates her as O'Brien's opponent. After Winston desperately screams, "Do it to Julia! Not me! Julia!" (300), his subsequent experience is described in orgasmic terms: "He was still strapped in the chair, but he had fallen through the floor, through the walls of the building, through the earth, through the oceans, through the atmosphere, into outer space [...]. He was light-years distant, but O'Brien was still standing at his side" (300). Though everything else in the room fades as Winston becomes one with the universe, O'Brien remains by his side; he and O'Brien are one with the universe, falling through the earth and into the stars. Importantly, this release occurs simultaneously with Winston's rejection of Julia, and suggests that his criminality has been purged by his acceptance of a homosocial order represented by Big Brother and free of female mediation.

### **Conclusions**

Though it is absolute, the defeat of Winston's revolution in Room 101 by Big Brother's homosocial order does not necessarily imply the only possible result of attempts to overthrow INGSOC in Oceania. The proles are presented repeatedly as the great untapped micro-power in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*: Winston, for instance, believes that "[i]f there [i]s hope, it *must* lie in the proles, because only there, in those swarming disregarded masses, 85 per cent of the population of Oceania, could the force to destroy the Party ever be generated" (72). The proles are not only

numerous, but free to interact as they choose, and as a potential swarm, their power is unpredictable – it almost seems from this characterization as though they could coagulate into any number of possible groups at any moment. This could not happen with Outer Party members because their lack of free inter-personal relationships prevents it:

The Party could not be overthrown from within. Its enemies, if it had any enemies, had no way of coming together or even of identifying one another. Even if the legendary Brotherhood existed, as just possibly it might, it was inconceivable that its members could ever assemble in larger numbers than twos and threes. Rebellion meant a look in the eyes, an inflexion in the voice; at the most, an occasional whispered word. (72)

The issue here is spontaneity. It is the fact that the denizens of Barcelona have over centuries developed patterns of street fighting that shapes the inter-party fighting in *Homage to Catalonia* by activating dormant forms of subjectivity that come with coded accounts of how warfare ought to be waged in this city. The parallel between Barcelona's street-fighting and the proles is not exact: whereas it is membership in assemblages other than the unions, militias, and parties that allow for this sort of spontaneity in Barcelona, it is the lack of territorialization and coding that makes it possible for the proles. The idea here seems to be that because they are left to make sense of the world and forge relationships in any way they like, there is nothing to stop them from forming a mass-movement that will overthrow the Party: "They needed only to rise up and shake themselves like a horse shaking off flies. If they chose they could blow the party to pieces tomorrow morning. Surely sooner or later it must occur to them to do it?" (72-3). But in Oceania, this is a big "if," and the question mark at the end of Winston's statement that "it must occur to them to do it?" is a revealing qualification of what initially looks like a statement of Winston's faith in the inevitability of revolution. According to Winston, the problem with the proles is a

lack of consciousness and a contradiction that seems to ensure prole consciousness will never emerge: “Until they become conscious they will never rebel, and until after they have rebelled they cannot become conscious” (74). As the shared assumption that violence would break out in the Barcelona street-fighting was enough to make it so without any organization, the shared assumption that revolution will not happen in Oceania may be enough to ensure it does not.

Though the Party is certainly adamant that “[b]y controlling the past [... it] takes full control of human consciousness [... and] controls both the past and the future” (Gottlieb 89), the novel also signals the possibility that human nature, which exists on a time-scale that began before and will survive in some form at least as long as the Party, also provides ways to resist. It appears almost as though the undisturbed consistency of the proles, though bestial and preconscious, connects them directly to evolutionary-time and even a core humanity: “The proles were immortal, you could not doubt it when you looked at that valiant figure in the yard. In the end their awakening would come. And until that happened, though it might be a thousand years, they would stay alive against all the odds, like birds, passing on from body to body the vitality which the Party did not share and could not kill” (229). This is the seemingly naïve belief that Winston keeps coming back to while O’Brien tortures him, which leads O’Brien to make Winston stand naked before the mirror. It is this belief that leads to Winston’s frequent gut-feelings: “Why should one feel it to be intolerable unless one had some kind of ancestral memory that things had once been different?” (63). The idea here is that, though INGSOC operates on a temporal order of magnitude much greater than individuals, INGSOC-time is nothing compared to the scale of the proles, who, being immortal, are a stand in for something like evolutionary-time.

Though critics frequently view the novel's tone toward revolution as pessimistic,<sup>92</sup> it is closer to ambivalent. The ambivalence – the hopelessness of Oceania as well as the traction that Orwell's narrative provides in terms of the potential of revolution – is, of course, tied to the novel's political purpose as a response to totalitarianism which attempts to interpellate readers to assemble against totalitarian forces. As a novel that is fighting against the possibility of totalitarianism spreading after WWII, Zwerdling insists that "[i]ts tactics are primarily defensive," and notes that Winston "is much less concerned with the future than with the past – which is of course the reader's present. He wants to recapture the modest individual liberty of Orwell's England. By comparison, his millennialism remains very unformed" (105). Similarly, Hunter's reading of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as "an allegory about fantasy" concludes that "the only answer to the negative strategy of fantasy lies in the difference between our worlds and the posited world" (224). What these readings suggest is that the novel should not be read as pure and simple pessimism, but also that Orwell takes steps to prevent optimism: the novel is in part an argument that totalitarianism must be opposed so stringently in the present *because* there is no knowing *if* it could be gotten rid of.

This suggests that the repeated phrase, "We are the dead" (142, 183, 230), not only demonstrates Winston and Julia's successful interpellation as appropriate subjects of Party repression, but also interpellates the reader, for as Meyers has pointed out (139), this repeated phrase begins the second stanza of John McCrae's WWI poem, "In Flanders Fields" (line 6).<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> In his consideration of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as a retelling of "that basic myth of Western culture, Jack the Giant-Killer," for instance, Patrick Reilly insists, "Orwell [...] has written a wicked fairy-tale, an antifable, designed, it would seem, not to embolden but to dismay, exalting the giant and emasculating his opponent" (27). Likewise, in her consideration of gender roles in the novel, Patai argues, Orwell's "vision comes full circle: no hope for the future, no escape into the past" (250), and in no small part, it is the past that enables that position to have traction. It is important to note, though, that readings that view the novel as, in one way or another, "exalting the giant" and insisting that there is "no hope for the future" are based on little more than choosing to believe O'Brien that the situation is as hopeless as it seems – a position that may be plausible, but is also uncertain.

<sup>93</sup> The poem proceeds as follows:

This line forms the basis of the call to “[t]ake up our quarrel with the foe” (10), and the warning that “[i]f ye break faith with us who die / We shall not sleep” (13-4), in what amounts to a firm assertion that to give up the cause of those who died fighting would be to dishonor their sacrifices. That this line is echoed throughout *Nineteen Eighty-Four* goes a long way to suggest that any defeatism presented in the novel is subordinated to the call for its readers to continue the battle for freedom and against totalitarian oppression, just as Flory’s suicide is a call to oppose imperial rule and Orwell’s penning *Homage to Catalonia* is a call to reject the quietist accounts popular in the Leftist newspapers. In all three cases, the key is to use individual memory to come up with a more accurate account of reality, and to use this account to code modes of subjectivity that will enable a more just organization of society.

In his 1946 essay “Why I Write” Orwell insists, “[t]he Spanish war and other events in 1936-37 turned the scale and thereafter I knew where I stood. Every line of serious work that I have written since 1936 has been written, directly or indirectly, against totalitarianism and for democratic socialism, as I understand it” (1083); *Homage to Catalonia*, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, and even *Burmese Days* (though published in 1934, before the Spanish Civil War) are all arguments for better forms of democracy that attack political systems and technologies of dominance that exploit the masses to shore up their own power. All three texts begin their assaults by outlining the potential democratic power of assemblage particularly when grounded

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We are the Dead. Short days ago  
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,  
Loved and were loved, and now we lie  
In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe:  
To you from failing hands we throw  
The torch; be yours to hold it high.  
If ye break faith with us who die  
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow  
In Flanders fields. (John McCrae, “In Flanders Fields” 6-15)

in true and meaningful shared accounts of the past, and they all exhibit the importance of leaving a space where subjectivity is not defined by political parties as a safeguard against tyranny.

While the pattern of individuals struggling and failing against macroscopic power suggests a mistrust of all large-scale assemblages, Orwell consistently predicates the potential of small-scale assemblages on their ability to gain enough power to do battle with unjust large-scale assemblages. All three texts suggest that an awareness of how macro-scale power manipulates individuals can enable us to, in the words of McCrae, “[t]ake up our quarrel with the foe,” and may enable us to generate more just democracies.



## Section Four – Evelyn Waugh

### Introduction

Virginia Woolf and George Orwell both treat subjectivity as emerging from the interactions of group membership and discourse. Woolf's fiction is more concerned with questions of group ontology, suggesting the multiplicity of one's relationships creates a variety of subjectivities grounded in various historical modes, whereas war eliminates these until one is simply a subject of the state who can be sent to kill or die on its behalf. Orwell's fiction places more emphasis on discourse and the scale discrepancies manipulated by political powers, so that the accounts of macro-level assemblages (be they imperialist ideology, press accounts of the Spanish Civil War, or INGSOC's manipulation of history) are constantly threatening the smaller-scale assemblages that can more successfully account for individual memory and offer a better chance of providing meaningful relationships. Evelyn Waugh, on the other hand, critiques the intersection of group membership and discourse, showing society to use discourse alone to force assemblage, whether or not predominant coding corresponds with any ontologically valid groups or provides any meaningful way to account for "the given" of the current moment.

Part of the problem for Waugh is that England's exceedingly stratified social reality is not consistently coded in ways that are able to account for the social realities experienced by subjects, but this social reality is also highly territorialized, so that one is aggressively placed in one's assigned roles. The dominant discourses in Waugh's fiction are terribly suited to describe what the world is actually like but are never challenged. Any inconsistencies – between coding on different scales, between coding and objective fact, or between subjectivity and "the given" that should facilitate subjective emergence – should provide feedback so that coding is brought into line with apparent reality to change the territorializing pressures placed on subjects.

However, when events do show the predominant discourses to be out of line with the social reality they should govern, the response is invariably no more than a personnel shuffle, leaving the broad social divisions and the extant territorializing pressures intact. Thus, from moment to moment, individuals are shunted into whatever roles are most convenient to preserve demonstrably absurd coding on its own terms, so that the predominant discourses can continue undaunted through contradictions that should sink them. As a consequence, in Waugh's novels, the goal is not to preserve subjective multiplicity (as in Woolf's) or subjective indeterminacy (as in Orwell's), but to achieve stable subjectivity.

In Waugh's first novel, *Decline and Fall* (1928), Paul Pennyfeather struggles to make a life for himself after he is expelled from Scone College, Oxford. Though Paul is the victim of an assault undertaken by members of the socially elite Bollinger Club, he is punished as the more convenient guilty party, for his lack of privilege means that his expulsion will not upset Oxford's predominant social order. His expulsion incites a series of subjective changes as Paul shifts roles from a scholar studying for the church to a schoolmaster, a society fiancé, a scapegoat, and a prison inmate, until finally, following a faked death, he returns to Scone College to study for the church. Paul's unstable subjectivity points to the compulsory fluid subjectivity<sup>94</sup> required to survive in modern civilization. That so many different civil institutions fail Paul – and their other charges – also signals that while England's institutions may have the power to shape subjectivity, they are not using this power responsibly; instead, the institutions are consuming their wards to feed their own survival. No problems result when, following his faked death, Paul resumes his

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<sup>94</sup> I am, here, utilizing Bauman's treatment of "liquid modernity" in texts such as *Liquid Modernity* and *Liquid Times*, which Bauman characterizes in terms of the increased instability individuals face in contemporary society. I am using Bauman's metaphor of fluidity or liquidity – he uses the two terms interchangeably – because it gives a shorthand way to allude to both the subjective instability that is present over time (which is Bauman's main focus) and the quotidian instability that individuals face as a consequence of the exteriority of relations and the intrinsic relationality of subjectivity.

own studies from the beginning of the narrative with the false name he adopts being his own name, for everyone believes whatever account everyone else seems to believe: in this case, that this new Paul Pennyfeather is a different person who is misfortunate enough to share a name with a distant relative who was previously expelled.

In Waugh's WWII trilogy, *Sword of Honour* – which consists of *Men at Arms* (1952), *Officers and Gentlemen* (1955), and *Unconditional Surrender* (1961) – Guy Crouchback attempts to merge psychosexual and religious redemption after his divorce by taking up arms against the unholy alliance between Germany and the Soviet Union. The instability of Guy's identity throughout the war is mirrored by instability within the command structure and among the Allies. Throughout the trilogy, warfare is waged in ways that will maintain misinformation and institutional delusion rather than promote victory, and the discursive imperviousness that ruins lives in *Decline and Fall* takes them in great numbers on Crete and in Yugoslavia. The title of Waugh's final novel, *Unconditional Surrender*, refers not just to the end of WWII, but to Guy's rejection of international affairs and his surrender to the stable mode of subjectivity he inherits from his father as the head of the Crouchback family. This mode of subjectivity continues the family's tradition of service to the Roman Catholic Church and their community, and provides a way to achieve subjective stability without retreating from the world.

### Taxonomic Tyranny and Arbitrary Assemblage in *Decline and Fall*

On those remote pages it is written that animals are divided into (a) those that belong to the Emperor, (b) embalmed ones, (c) those that are trained, (d) suckling pigs, (e) mermaids, (f) fabulous ones, (g) stray dogs, (h) those that are included in this classification, (i) those that tremble as if they were mad, (j) innumerable ones, (k) those drawn with a very fine camel's hair brush, (l) others, (m) those that have just broken a flower vase, (n) those that resemble flies from a distance.

[...]

[O]bviously there is no classification of the universe that is not arbitrary and conjectural. The reason is very simple: we do not know what the universe is. (Jorge Luis Borges, "The Analytical Language of John Wilkins" 103-4)<sup>95</sup>

Several critics read Evelyn Waugh's *Decline and Fall* (1928) in explicitly Nietzschean terms, viewing the novel as predicated on conflict between Apollonian and Dionysian forces. These readings are largely based on the fact that the novel's avant-garde architect, Otto Silenus, is named after Silenus, "the bibulous tutor of the infant god Dionysus" (Heath 64), and that all of the novel's action is the consequence of the Bacchic excess that occurs at "the annual dinner of the Bollinger Club" (*Decline* 1). A group that "numbers reigning kings among its past members," the Bollingers hold dinners as an excuse for orgiastic alcoholism, cruelty, and destruction: "At the last dinner, three years ago, a fox had been brought in in a cage and stoned to death with champagne bottles. What an evening that had been!" (1). The Bollingers' violence is not confined to the dining room. Rather, they form a drunken mob that proceeds through the campus, destroying anything that represents culture or refinement: "They broke up Mr Austen's grand piano, [...] and threw the Matisse into his water jug; Mr Sanders had nothing to break except his windows, but they found the manuscript at which he had been working for the Newdigate Prize Poem, and had great fun with that" (3-4).

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<sup>95</sup> "El idioma analítico de John Wilkins" (1952).

The nature of this destruction suggests that “[d]espite their aristocratic pedigrees, the Bollingers [...] are a rabble of yahoos,” as Waugh presents a ruling class that has “turned against civilization” (McCartney 9; see also Heath 66; and Asquith). In addition, as Douglas Lane Patey notes, the faculty and staff are complicit with this destruction, even though the Bollingers are destroying the “embodiments of the cultural traditions it is the university’s job to foster and protect” (61). Motivated only by a desire to levy fines against the Bollinger members who belong to Scone College, knowing that “[t]here is some highly prized port in the senior common-room cellars that is only brought up when the College fines have reached £50” (2), Mr Sniggs, the Junior Dean, wants the Bollingers to wreak as much destruction as possible: “It’ll be more if they attack the Chapel [...]. Oh, please God, make them attack the Chapel” (3). The novel’s protagonist stands in stark opposition to the Dionysian Bollingers “as a symbol of moderation: he smokes ‘three ounces of tobacco a week’, drinks ‘a pint and a half of beer a day’ and reads in measured instalments *The Forsyte Saga*” (Asquith). Viewed in this light, the Bollingers’ attack on Paul Pennyfeather is an attack on order by chaos, on the Apollonian by the Dionysian. And the invaders are clearly victorious, for though “Paul is not literally torn apart and eaten, as he would have been at a real bacchanalia, [...] he is ruined nonetheless” (Heath 66) when he is sent down from Scone College.

Nevertheless, viewing the novel in terms of “an irreconcilable opposition between energetic willfulness and effete reasonableness” (McCartney 9) runs the risk of arguing Waugh is endorsing orgiastic chaos. This is a position exemplified by Robert Garnett, who claims that “the governing spirit of the novel is not at all ambiguous. *Decline and Fall* belongs to Grimes and Margot and their fellows, the characters who live most dangerously and most fully” (57). Similarly, Michael Gorra argues that “Waugh is too attracted by the dynamism of heresy to side

with the static” (202). These readings seem to conflate comedy and sympathy, for while the apparently Dionysian forces present in the novel – principally, the Bollingers, Captain Grimes, and Margot – invariably escape justice, such plotting is foundational to the novel’s tone and need not correspond to an authorial or textual endorsement of these forces.

In addition, though George McCartney characterizes the novel’s manifestations of the Apollonian as “effete,” using a charged term to suggest that the novel’s Apollonian structures fail to accurately represent reality, they nevertheless remain dominant as social forces. The success of novel’s Dionysian characters arises not from their dynamic superiority over the Apollonian, but rather *because of* the potent but counterproductive Apollonian impulses. These Apollonian impulses are evident in the novel’s various taxonomies, which demonstrate attempts at macro-scale coding of society to territorialize individuals and groups into distinct categories. But while these codes are used to precisely categorize all the components of civilization, the macro-scale accounts are shown to be at best vague, and more often based on delusion or conscious deception than on a reasonable account of “the given.” In neither case do the macro-scale accounts correspond to the subject’s experiences participating in the smaller-scale assemblages. The Apollonian on display in *Decline and Fall* is at once absurd and aggressive, arbitrary and tyrannical. Its absurdity rests in the contents of the coding used to justify classifications that result in aggressively enforced (de/re)territorializations, despite bearing no similarity to objective reality.

In short, in this chapter, I will argue that the Apollonian order on display in *Decline and Fall* is repeatedly shown to be as pervasively destructive as the Dionysian, and that the precarious state of Paul’s life and society are as much a result of Apollonian as of Dionysian forces run amok. To this end, I will begin by looking at the novel’s compulsion towards

classification, considering some of the discourses and taxonomies that are responsible for Paul Pennyfeather's fate. This compulsion to classify is repeatedly shown to be dangerously ignorant of a vast number of characters and circumstances that exist despite the fact that their existence does not make sense within the prevailing classificatory schemes and discourses. By analyzing the role of the unimaginable, or those who defy classification, I explore Waugh's treatment of the modern impulse to use ready-made taxonomies, regardless of whether or not they make sense of observable reality. Waugh's examination of the drive to taxonomize is one of the reasons that A. E. Dyson's insistence that "[Waugh's] novels do not extend our awareness of *why* people are as they are, and they inhibit rather than create compassion" (79) is problematic. Rather, as Robert Murray Davis argues, the novel works "to undercut the practice of judging by labels rather than by reality" (43). Indeed, this critique of judging by labels is undertaken in a way that forms a meaningful discursive analysis directly addressing the question "of *why* people are as they are."

As Borges points out in this chapter's epigraph, all systems of classification are necessarily arbitrary and conjectural, and as Foucault reflects on Borges' entry from the fictional *Celestial Emporium of Benevolent Knowledge*, he insists that "the thing that, by means of the fable, is demonstrated as the exotic charm of another system of thought, is the limitation of our own, the stark impossibility of thinking *that*" – a realization that raises the question, "what is it impossible to think, and what kind of impossibility are we faced with here?" (*The Order of Things* xvi). A similar consideration of what it is possible to think within the novel's prevailing discourses leads us to considerations of the relationship between Apollonian and Dionysian forces, and of the inability of discourse to exhaustively – or even adequately – describe phenomena. Despite this inability, where discrepancies between discourse and reality emerge in *Decline and Fall*, the solution appears in the form of increased fluid subjectivity – the

expectation that characters will continually change to fit society's expectations of them at a given moment. As Waugh's account suggests the costs of fluid subjectivity are high, I will conclude by returning to the question of whether the Apollonian, as depicted in the novel, should not be considered as destructive a force as the Dionysian; to this end, I will consider Otto Silenus's speech on the meaning of life, which divides humanity into two species – the static and the dynamic – not as a key to the novel, nor as an authorial endorsement of isolation and quietism in the face of social strife, but rather as nothing more than yet another misguided attempt to impose a dubious and narrow taxonomy onto a complex social reality already hindered by an excess of such taxonomies.

### **Aggressive Classification**

As much as Paul Pennyfeather's expulsion from Oxford is a result of orgiastic Dionysian chaos, it is also the result of an Apollonian compulsion to classify. Even the Bollinger Club's assault on Paul is grounded in an attempt to enforce a social taxonomy:

the tie of Paul's old school bore a marked resemblance to the pale blue and white of the Bollinger Club. The difference of a quarter of an inch in the width of the stripes was not one that Lumsden of Strathdrummond was likely to appreciate.

“Here's an awful man wearing the Boller tie,” said the Laird. It was not for nothing that since pre-Christian times his family has exercised chieftainship over uncharted miles of barren moorland. (5)

Citing this passage and a 1937 article in which Waugh argues that “[t]he whole of thought and taste consists in distinguishing between similars” (“More Barren Leaves” 214), Patey argues that this scene “establishes Waugh's simplest satiric procedure in *Decline and Fall*: indecorum, a gap between characters' roles and their behaviour” (61). Lumsden of Strathdrummond's inability to



distinguish between similars – whether because of his intoxication or because of a more general unsuitability for the task is unclear – is his failing. Nonetheless, indecorum is only possible because making such determinations *is* part of the Laird’s role. The Bollinger tie functions here like gang colours, marking simple group membership, and as a signifier of the ruling elite who make up the group. Though the Laird reads the tie itself incorrectly, he is correct in his interpretation of Paul as “an awful man,” according to the criteria through which Lumsden of Strathdrummond views anyone below his social rank to be awful: while he is unable to correctly identify a tie, and consequently misreads a signifier of social coding, he is able to read the unnamed cues that show Paul is of too low a social standing to be a Bollinger.

Multiple levels of the Scone College administration repeat Lumsden of Strathdrummond’s overzealous application of taxonomies as they continue to persecute Paul on dubious grounds, all of them reaching the conclusion that Paul is, in some sense, an “awful man” and an unsuitable member of the college. Mr Postlethwaite, the domestic Bursar of Scone College, affirms such an assessment of Paul’s social position with a “sigh of relief” when he and Mr Sniggs discover the identity of the victim of the Bollinger assault:

“But it’s quite all right. It isn’t [Lord] Rending. It’s Pennyfeather – some one of no importance.”

“Well, that saves a great deal of trouble. I am glad” (6).

The College Master’s determination is that running “the whole length of the quadrangle [...] *without his trousers*” is unseemly, flagrantly indecent, and “*not* the conduct we expect of a scholar” (6-7). Again, the College Master has made an incorrect assignment of blame, but one that is based on a correct assessment of Paul’s social position: if the lack of trousers is not Paul’s fault, then it must be the fault of someone who *is* of importance, and assigning blame justly

would go against Mr Postlethwaite's earlier assertion that they "must at all costs avoid an *outrage*" (6). In addition, when the Junior Dean suggests the possibility of using the College's internal mechanism for dealing with Bollinger misdeeds to punish Paul by having him pay a substantial fine, the Master is explicit that Paul's marginality makes this impossible: "I very much doubt whether he could pay. I understand he is not well off.[...] I think we should do far better to get rid of him altogether. That sort of young man does the College no good" (7). As Manuel Megías Rosa explains, "Pennyfeather is not a member either of a noble or wealthy family and that tiny detail is not to be forgiven at Scone college" (114). While Paul's expulsion from college is rooted in at least two acts of indecorum – the Laird incorrectly interpreting Paul's tie, and the Master his guilt – Laird and Master are both correct in determining Paul to be a suitable victim: one who has a sufficiently low income and social position not to have defences against violence and institutional injustice.

The end result of this is the ascription of yet another title: one who has been "sent down for indecent behaviour" (8). As a degree is no guarantee that one is actually suited to practice in one's area of expertise, having been "sent down for indecent behaviour" is obviously not a guarantee that one "is flagrantly indecent" (7). But that Paul *has* been sent down for indecency – however unjustly – is a fact, and this distinction sticks to Paul in the same way a degree sticks to one who satisfactorily completes one's education. Having been sent down is a floating signifier, but it is assumed to signify Paul's general unsuitability as plainly as a degree would signify his suitability to a particular type of work. In fact, the comically correct prediction of the porter, Blackall, as he sees Paul off campus, makes it clear that being sent down territorializes Paul's identity by defining his character and future in a way that parodies the career path of one who has successfully completed one's degree: "I expect you'll be becoming a schoolmaster, sir.

That's what most of the gentlemen does, sir, that gets sent down for indecent behaviour" (8). The popularity of this career path also highlights the danger society faces as a result of faulty educational institutions which too easily ascribe and punish indecency, on the one hand, and too easily ignore it, on the other.

Rather than challenging the College's decision, Paul's guardian reinforces it, fortifying society's taxonomies by tacitly endorsing the College's unjust classification of Paul. Though Paul's guardian could cause "an outrage" by pointing out the injustice of the Master's determination of Paul's guilt, assuming the truth of the college's judgment allows him simultaneously to abandon his responsibility for Paul and to improve his own social standing, and it is, therefore, preferable to reinforce the college's dubious coding of Paul's behaviour and deterritorialization from the college. Paul's guardian "cheerfully" embraces Paul's loss of inheritance, and is happy to note that he has been "left [...] with complete discretion to withhold this allowance should [he] not consider [Paul's] course of life satisfactory" (11). Thus, he abdicates his duty by following the terms of that duty, benefitting from the institutional classification of his ward: "That spring Paul's guardian's daughter had two new evening frocks and, thus glorified, became engaged to a well-conducted young man in the Office of Works" (12). The novel centres on the actions of "the delegated custodians of civilized values [who] have neither the courage nor the conviction necessary to their task" (McCartney 11). The satirical status of this action itself is conventional, for Waugh "defines characters through their roles (teacher, lawyer, doctor)" and emphasizes the disjunction between their actions and the "unspoken agreement between writer and reader about how characters inhabiting various roles *should* act" (Patey 62). But whereas Patey has argued that this strategy "usually ratifies existing moral and social norms" and "constitutes not an attack on hierarchy but on individuals' failure to

live up to their rank” (63), Waugh reveals that the mode of signification used to establish and reinforce social hierarchies is, in this instance, part of the problem, for the system is able to function according to signs without consideration of their referents. While Paul’s guardian wilfully abuses the terms of his guardianship, he is able to do so because the social hierarchy allows for a radical change in the terms of his duty to Paul as a result of ascriptions that are doubtful and should be seen as indeterminate. The influx of cash that results from this abdication allows a further manipulation of the system of social signification, such that the possession of two evening frocks, the purchase of which is enabled by the theft of Paul’s inheritance, signifies the marriageability of the guardian’s daughter, as this suitor’s position in the Office of Works defines his value as a husband and son-in-law. Paul’s guardian uses the fact that Paul has been sent down to improve his own position in a system of social taxonomies that is dubious on multiple levels, but that only allows for changes in position if one is able to manipulate the correct signifiers.

Recognizing the unreliability but ultimate importance of the system of social signification, the Church and Gargoyle hiring agency, where Paul goes to look for work, is employed to misrepresent in ways that allow applicants to find work despite being unsuitable in the terms of the predominant taxonomies. On the one hand, Mr Levy of Church and Gargoyle exaggerates, lies, and otherwise obfuscates to make Paul more attractive as a potential employee: “Sent down for indecent behaviour, eh?[...] Well, I don’t think we’ll say anything about that. In fact, officially, mind, you haven’t told me. We call that sort of thing ‘Education discontinued for personal reasons’” (12). Given the false impression created by Paul’s having been sent down, the dishonesty of the hiring agency is merely countering one fiction with another. When Paul and Mr Levy respond to a particular job posting, however, Mr Levy’s dishonesty becomes less ethically

defensible. The advertisement they respond to “requires immediately junior assistant master to teach Classics and English to University Standard with Subsidiary Mathematics, German, and French. Experience essential; first-class games essential” (13). Though Paul points out his total unsuitability for such a posting – “But I don’t know a word of German, I’ve had no experience, I’ve got no testimonials, and I can’t play cricket” (13) – Mr Levy insists, “It doesn’t do to be too modest [...]. It’s wonderful what one can teach when one tries” (13). This dishonesty is deployed in response to the dubious classification of the school, and the fact that it, too, has a less than shining reputation. As Mr Levy explains, the fact that the advertisement lists “Status of School” as “School” (13) is not auspicious: “Between ourselves, Llanabba hasn’t a good name in the profession. We class schools, you see, into four grades: Leading School, First-rate School, Good School, and School. Frankly, [...] School is pretty bad” (14). But however much their mutual suitability is rooted in the fact that both Paul and the school occupy poor places in taxonomies that rank instructor and institution, there is a professional inducement not “to be too modest” when assessing teaching qualifications: the moment Paul is offered the position at Llanabba, it becomes clear that Church and Gargoyle is paid a commission by successfully placed employees (17), so that the more it exaggerates Paul’s qualifications, the higher its reward.

While the employment agency’s pay structure leads to their systemic dishonesty, the school’s pay structure makes it imperative for them to uncover just enough information about Paul’s past to be able to justify reducing his wages while still hiring him. When the head of Llanabba, Dr Fagan, asks why Paul has left University, and Paul responds that he was sent down for indecent behaviour, Dr Fagan’s response suggests that this news is anything but unwelcome: “to be practical, Mr Pennyfeather, I can hardly pay [the advertised] one hundred and twenty pounds to any one who has been sent down for indecent behaviour. Suppose we fix your salary at

ninety pounds a year to begin with?” (15-6). Knowing the reputation of his own school and knowing that nobody would teach at it unless burdened by his own faulty reputation, Fagan does not see being sent down as a reason not to offer Paul a job. At the same time, once Paul’s secret enters the salary negotiations, Fagan is able to place him in a lower category and to reduce his offer by twenty-five percent. Fagan’s desire “to be practical” is nothing more than a recognition that market value is determined by labels such as “sent down for indecent behaviour.” In effect, the school is simultaneously assuming the truth of the predominant coding (to justify low pay) and its falsity (to be able to hire someone with a past deemed problematic). Fagan’s insistence that he “shall not ask for details” (15) is not merely for decency’s sake: not knowing the particulars allows him to judge solely by the discursive taint that accompanies being sent down for indecency, while allowing Fagan to assume that Paul was not sent down for any reason that would make him explicitly unsuitable for teaching small boys.

Whereas the hiring agency has a financial inducement to conceal the circumstances around Paul’s departure from Oxford, Fagan has a financial inducement to uncover the circumstances, but neither party is interested in the particulars of Paul’s being sent down for the simple reason that being sent down for indecency functions as a sign that is for them fixed discursively, but not connected to material reality. Regardless of the particulars that have led to the charge, “indecency” is coding that functions taxonomically to territorialize the individual into a particular class so as to determine their value. Ironically, then, where the Bollingers’ assault is a result of their orgiastic Dionysian revelry, the attack leads to an aggressively asserted system of Apollonian classification, applied haphazardly and relied upon universally in a series of self-serving actions.

## The Unthinkable

The Apollonian impulse that is behind the compulsion to classify on exhibit throughout *Decline and Fall* is dangerous not only because it has a tendency to promote injustice, but also because it is oblivious to anything that cannot easily be categorized. With the appearance of the Welsh band hired to provide music for the Annual School Sports at Llanabba, the unthinkable enters the text in a scene that uses the inconceivable for comic effect while emphasizing its disruptive power:

Ten men of revolting appearance were approaching from the drive. They were low of brow, crafty of eye and crooked of limb. They advanced huddled together with the loping tread of wolves, peering about them furtively as they came, as though in constant terror of ambush; they slavered at their mouths, which hung loosely over their receding chins, while each clutched under his ape-like arm a burden of curious and unaccountable shape. On seeing the Doctor they halted and edged back, those behind squinting and mouthing over their companions' shoulders.

“Crikey!” said Philbrick. “Loonies! This is where I shoot.”

“I refuse to believe the evidence of my eyes,” said the Doctor. “These creatures simply do not exist.” (80)

As Garnett points out, the scene reveals typical traits of Waugh's satire: “the concentration and marshalling of vivid language; the willingness, even eagerness, to shift point of view if the shift will augment the immediate comic effect; dialogue recorded without comment to display quirks of individual character and their comic confrontation” (41). Here, the individuals whose perspectives are on display model a process for dealing with people who do not fit into a ready-made taxonomy. Though at first regarded as “extraordinary-looking people,” the narrator

emphasizes their difference by casting them in bestial terms. The outsider figures move “with the loping tread of wolves,” as though they are not members of civilization, but beings of nature red in tooth and claw, who slaver and hold their “burden[s] of curious and unaccountable shape” in an “ape-like” manner. Philbrick, armed out of the fear that someone will try to steal the diamonds he is wearing, interprets them as lunatics and sees their appearance as likely requiring violent action. Faced with people who cannot be readily classified, Fagan refuses to acknowledge the possibility of their existence, so that the social taxonomies trump the evidence of his own eyes. Though Fagan is not being entirely serious, his statement is a joke at the expense of a system that relies heavily on a pervasive but dubious Apollonian order, so the joke draws attention to the sheer power of social taxonomies that all too frequently lack the power to account for objective reality.

The Welsh are important to the novel as a group marginalized in the prevailing Apollonian system, though they are so frequently used as fodder for comedy that James W. Nichols has suggested, “[t]here are enough Welsh jokes to suggest that [Waugh] means to impugn utterly the national character and culture of Wales” (51). The nearly incomprehensible speech of the band’s leader, the station master, emphasizes the discursive elements of their marginality: “‘We are the silver band the Lord bless and keep you,’ said the station master in one breath, ‘the band that no one could beat whatever but two indeed in the Eisteddfod that for all North Wales was look you.[...] To march about you would not like us?’” (81). The slipperiness of the first sentence, spoken “in one breath,” is compounded by the novel’s characteristic Welsh hyperbaton, which presents words in an order that is unusual to the point of frequently seeming random. The culturally stereotypical and merely phatic “look you” marks nothing more than the



end of a clause. Here, the station master's syntax works against the content, through which he intends to clarify who they are and why they have come to the Annual School Sports.

Often, though, such grammatical nonsense emphasizes the unspeakability of the thoughts the Welsh are communicating. For example, the band's reason for playing the same song again and again is ostensibly to avoid religious hypocrisy, but such principles disappear at once: "no man can you ask against his Maker to blaspheme whatever unless him to pay more you were. Three pounds for the music is good and one for the blasphemy look you" (107). On one hand, their interest in making more money aligns the values of the Welsh with those of the rest of the society on display in the novel. On the other, their unparalleled frankness about their hypocrisy turns them into a source of comedy, but also of the uncanny as they readily expose what the rest of the characters are desperate to conceal. Lord Circumference's description of his conversation with the station master speaks to the resulting confusion: "He asked me whether I should like to meet his sister-in-law; and when I said, 'Yes, I should be delighted to,' he said that it would cost a pound normally, but that he'd let me have special terms. What *can* he have meant, Mr Pennyfoot?" (101). While Lord Circumference's ignorance of the station master's meaning may be real or affected – his ignorance of Paul's last name points to his more general witlessness – the openness of the scarcely subtle invitation to pay for sex with the station master's family member stands in stark contrast to Margot's ownership of a network of brothels, the unspeakable source of her income. The frankness of the Welsh and their willingness to state plainly, if confusingly, what the rest of the characters would never verbally acknowledge serves not only to generate comedy, but to level serious critiques at the layered discourses that govern society.

In fact, the unwillingness to acknowledge the reality of prostitution results in Paul's second major change in subject position, when he is sent to prison for crimes committed by his

fiancée, Margot Beste-Chetwynde. Though Paul is only unknowingly complicit in his fiancée's crimes, as the judge makes clear when passing judgment, he bears the full weight of guilt that is made all the worse because it besmirches Margot's good name:

Margot Beste-Chetwynde's name was not mentioned, though the judge in passing sentence remarked that "no one could be ignorant of the callous insolence with which, on the very eve of arrest for this most infamous of crimes, the accused had been preparing to join his name with one honoured in his country's history, and to drag down to his own pitiable depths of depravity a lady of beauty, rank, and stainless reputation." (215-6)

It is Paul's social position and the fact that his name is not one honoured in the country's history that make him the assumed guilty party. Though Margot's name is honoured, it is a name she married into. And as Fagan makes explicit when first mentioning Margot to Paul, her own association with England is short, and her reputation is far from stainless: "She is the Honourable Mrs Beste-Chetwynde, you know – sister-in-law of Lord Pastmaster – a very wealthy woman, South American. They always say that she poisoned her husband" (61). It is the case that "there is no indication, either explicitly or implicitly, that the way in which she has achieved her success has spoiled it" (Nichols 51), not even to the extent that her probable murder of her first husband has stained her reputation enough to make it seem more likely she could be the one running an international prostitution ring. Whereas Margot's beauty and sex may have been enough to place her beyond suspicion in a case involving an international prostitution racket, her position in the social order, however nefariously attained, makes it unthinkable that she could be involved, so that macro-level coding once again unalterably determines territoriality that was suspiciously attained and is nebulously defined.

The novel drives home the point that Paul must be a scapegoat because of the sheer inconceivability of Margot's guilt by making it central to the narrative as one of Paul's epiphanies – and one of the few moments where Paul is shown reaching any conclusion about his experiences. It is Margot's son, Peter Beste-Chetwynde, who first makes the point that Margot's guilt is unthinkable when he visits Paul ahead of the trial: "She rather feels the whole thing's her fault, really, and, short of going to prison herself, she'll do anything to help. You can't imagine Mamma in prison, can you?" (217). For long after Peter's visit, Paul's assessment of Margot is "torn and distracted by two conflicting methods of thought" for he is sure that "[h]e had 'done the right thing' in shielding the woman [...], but Margot had not quite filled the place assigned to her, [...] and he was shielding her, not from misfortune nor injustice, but from the consequences of her crimes" (252). His problem is taxonomic and points to incongruities between modes of subjectivity, for he has behaved as someone in his subject position ought to, but she has not. Peter's words recur to Paul when he happens upon a picture of Margot in a newspaper on his way to Egdon Heath Penal Settlement, and they lead to the epiphany that resolves the apparent conflict between Margot's obligations and actions:

As he studied Margot's photograph, [...] he was strengthened in his belief that there was, in fact, one law for her and another for himself [...]. It was not simply that Margot had been very rich or that he had been in love with her. It was just that he *saw* the *impossibility* of Margot in prison; the bare connection of vocables associating the ideas was obscene. Margot dressed in prison uniform, hustled down corridors [...] set to work in the laundry washing other prisoners' clothes – these things were *impossible*, and if the preposterous processes of law had condemned her, then the woman that they actually caught and pinned down would not have been Margot, but some quite other person of the

same name and somewhat similar appearance. It was impossible to imprison the Margot who had committed the crime. (253)

The apparent “impossibility” of the criminal Margot in prison is rooted in Paul’s recognition of the primacy of discourse over reality, as her guilt is plain, but could never be recognized in the predominant social order. Though McCartney insists that the inconceivability of Margot’s punishment is a result of her being “a goddess of Becoming, a pure Dionysian principle quite beyond the censure of a spiritless morality” (16), the Dionysian is grounded in chaos and disorder, so the Dionysian cannot be the sole force behind the social order that protects Margot; it cannot be merely Margot’s nature, but society’s Apollonian impulse to classify that nature and her position in society that are at issue. It is such a system of thought that determines, in Foucault’s words, “what it is possible to think,” and this ordering of reality into discourse and social taxonomy is Apollonian. The fact that Paul sees it “as a natural law” that they should be governed by a system in which someone in Margot’s subject position cannot be sent to prison, a system in which “it had better be Paul than that other woman with Margot’s name” (253-4), indicates that society’s problems are by no means rooted exclusively in the Dionysian, or even in the relative weakness of the Apollonian – or, for that matter, in the types of people Paul and Margot are. Rather, in *Decline and Fall*, the Apollonian is an oppressive and destructive force in its own right: it is a force which orders humans in such a way that wrongdoing by some becomes literally unimaginable and, therefore, is assumed to be impossible; that “the bare connection of vocables associating the ideas” necessary to express such guilt would be “obscene”; and that the innocent must suffer not only to protect the guilty, but to protect a system of signification that is dependent on their nominal innocence.

## Fluid Subjectivity

Paul's changes of subject position are, thus, the consequence of attempts to set right discrepancies between what is thought to be possible and what is patently the case – in those cases where simply ignoring what is readily apparent is not possible – and he is so consistently plagued by such discrepancies that the narrator suggests the novel “is really an account of the mysterious disappearance of Paul Pennyfeather, so that readers must not complain if the shadow which took his name does not amply fill the important part of hero” (163). While characters who fare better than Paul also experience fluid subjectivity, several of them use it to their advantage, successfully manipulating the superficiality of society's subjective taxonomies to achieve their own ends. Grimes is the most dangerously Dionysian character in the novel, but he is initially presented as protected by his privileged subject position as a “public-school man”:

[Y]ou see, I'm a public school man. That means everything. There's a blessed equity in the English social system, [...] that insures the public-school man against starvation. One goes through four or five years of perfect hell at an age when life is bound to be hell anyway, and after that the social system never lets one down.

Not that I stood four or five years of it, mind. I got the push soon after my sixteenth birthday. But my housemaster was a public-school man. He knew the system. “Grimes,” he said, “I can't keep you in the House after what has happened. I have the other boys to consider. But I don't want to be too hard on you. I want you to start again.” So he sat down there and then and wrote me a letter of recommendation to any future employer[.] (31-2)

When Grimes uses the phrase, his frequently being “in the soup” (31) is not merely a euphemism for any sort of trouble, but specifically for molesting children. However, Grimes is protected by

the unspeakable nature of his crimes, for a frank disclosure of the sexual abuse<sup>96</sup> could harm not only the reputation of his employers but also the broader prestige enjoyed by other public-school men. The old housemaster's letter of reference demonstrates the irresponsibility at the heart of this process, for while the housemaster recognizes a duty to "the other boys" directly under his charge, he gives Grimes a way to harm countless other boys in other institutions. Grimes is also protected by his own belief system: he lives by the mantra that "one can never be unhappy for long provided one does just exactly what one wants to and when one wants to," sees himself as "singularly in harmony with the primitive promptings of humanity," and is governed by a personal Apollonian system that is perfectly suited to living with the consequences of his actions: "I don't pretend to be a particularly pious sort of chap, but I've never had any Doubts. When you've been in the soup as often as I have, it gives you a sort of feeling that everything's for the best, really" (40).

All the same, the protection Grimes gets from the public-school system and his ready acceptance of consequences are not infinite, and on occasion Grimes is also required to adopt radically fluid subjectivity. For instance, it is evident when he is obliged to marry "Flossie," one of Dr Fagan's daughters, that Grimes has been caught in an act that not even being a public-school man can save him from: "I think I've about run through the schoolmastering profession. I don't mind telling you I might have found it pretty hard to get another job. There are limits" (132). When the primacy of "public-school man" as subject position is insufficient protection from the consequences of his crimes, Grimes resorts to a more extreme form of fluidity by faking his death and beginning anew under a new identity, leading McCartney to describe him as a "character who approaches the condition of pure Dionysian becoming – formless, protean,

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<sup>96</sup> For a detailed argument that Grimes's crime is child molestation, see Stovel 21-2.

infinitely adaptable” (23). It is his infinite adaptability that leads Paul to conclude, “Grimes [...] was of the immortals. He was a life force. Sentenced to death in Flanders, he popped up in Wales; drowned in Wales, he emerged in South America; engulfed in the dark mystery of Egdon Mire, he would rise again somewhere at sometime” (269). Yet, because Grimes’ liberty is directly at odds with subjective stability, he is forever trapped in a state of formlessness. This contradictory status has led Jerome Meckier to argue that “[l]ife ‘never lets one down’ [...] also means that it never lets one go,” which he sees as part of Waugh’s assault on “the Old-Boy network that Grimes, a Public School man, relies on” (55). Viewing Grimes as “a parodic Christ,” Meckier reads the character as a representative of “an unrelenting circle that exemplifies the secular history of mankind and the modern life process” – a process that situates Grimes as “a likeably comic but ultimately pessimistic symbol of useless, uninspired endurance, as metaphysically pointless as anything in Beckett” (56). In other words, the form of fluid subjectivity Grimes deploys is not the quotidian subjective multiplicity advocated by Woolf or the relational indeterminacy Orwell values, which, in different ways, consist in activating one of several potentially active modes of social identity according to the circumstances at hand. Rather than shifting into different modes as one is interpellated, Grimes’s fluidity requires the creation of totally new identities. As a result, the cost of his immortality is perpetual impermanence.

Whereas Grimes uses the possibility of absolutely fluid subjectivity as a contingency when being a “public-school man” is insufficient to keep him out of prison, fluid subjectivity is a way of life for Philbrick – a.k.a., Sir Solomon Philbrick, a.k.a., Sir Solomon Lucas-Dockery. He freely assumes whatever subject position seems most attractive to him at a given moment. Surviving by fraud, Philbrick’s true identity is never uncovered, and all the reader is given is the series of fictitious accounts Philbrick provides to others. When Paul, Grimes, and Prendergast

realize Philbrick has given each of them a different life story (116-22) and confront him, he is frank about his deception, but not about his true identity: “Since you mention it, [... the stories] were untrue. One day you shall know my full story” (129). The text does not deliver on this promise, and given his various transformations, where Waugh depicts him “masquerading as a butler, a burglar, a gambler, a novelist, and a cinema magnate, [Philbrick] has no real identity and represents the featureless interchangeability of an age devoid of distinct moral values” (Heath 68). I would add that the superficiality of England’s predominant taxonomies and the fluidity of subject positions make it easy for Philbrick to transgress these classifications and assume whatever position he chooses. Though Philbrick is momentarily imprisoned for his frauds, Paul encounters him near the end of the novel being chauffeured in the back of a Rolls-Royce, “a heavy fur rug over his knees” (287). Whereas Margot benefits from real beauty, wealth, and title, and Grimes exploits for all it is worth being “a public-school man,” Philbrick is able to capitalize on such distinctions, regardless of whether they have any basis in reality. Through Philbrick, Waugh emphasizes that, however thoroughly society relies on and judges according to its taxonomies, the extent to which society’s Apollonian system functions independent of any corresponding material reality makes it shockingly easy to manipulate this system to achieve one’s own ends.

Paul Pennyfeather is ultimately changed by his experiences only to the extent that he learns how to manipulate the system of coding that oppresses him for most of the novel to enable him to be territorialized into the mode of subjectivity of his choice. Paul’s ability to use taxonomies for his own ends is made evident following his Grimesean prison escape, which has been perpetrated by Margot.<sup>97</sup> Upon his return to Scone College,

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<sup>97</sup> A similar point is made by Meckier, who argues, for instance, that by escaping prison, “Paul becomes a convert to the illegitimate life-style of Fagan, Philbrick, and Grimes” (58).



Nobody recognized him. After much doubt and deliberation he retained the name of Pennyfeather, explaining to the Chaplain that he had, he believed, had a distant cousin at Scone a short time ago.

“He came to a very sad end,” said the Chaplain, “a wild young man.”

“He was a *very* distant cousin,” said Paul hastily.

“Yes, yes, I am sure he was. There is no resemblance between you. He was a thoroughly degenerate sort.” (284-5)

That Paul is able to go undetected among people who know him, even while using his actual name, highlights their comically absolute reliance on received taxonomies, for if *that* Pennyfeather is dead, then *this* must be another Pennyfeather – a cousin, naturally. As the story is consistent with what they have been told is the case, they believe it. Such classifications also allow them to continue to believe the untrue story of the circumstances of Paul’s being sent down. Oddly, their ability to believe Paul’s flimsy story emphasizes both the strength and the weakness of the Apollonian system governing how Paul’s peers make sense of the world: while it is a system strong enough to be able to require the systematic mistreatment of people like Paul, it is also a closed system, which operates only according to its own terms and without reference to the actual world, so that if one is able to change one’s identity in a way consistent with the prevailing discursive order, one can be relatively sure of success, whether or not the change is plausible. The very strength of the Dionysian in *Decline and Fall* is rooted in its materiality and in the fact that the Apollonian system at work in the novel functions by making sense of the world without attempting to relate sign and referent.

## Consequences and Conclusions

The character who faces the most serious short-term consequences as a result of the coding governing his actions is Prendergast, whose religion has not equipped him with the tools necessary to live. Prendergast had been a clergyman for the Church of England, and he discusses the events that led to him becoming a teacher at Llanabba in terms reminiscent of a natural disaster rather than as a consequence of the discourses he uses to make sense of the world: “‘If things had happened a little differently I should be a rector with my own house and bathroom. I might even have been a rural dean, only’ – and Mr Prendergast dropped his voice to a whisper – ‘only I had *doubts*’” (36). The very idea of *doubts* is so nearly unspeakable that Prendergast must say the word in hushed tones. Not just any doubts, Prendergast’s have direct bearing on the Dionysian: “[I]t wasn’t the ordinary sort of Doubt about Cain’s wife or the Old Testament miracles or the consecration of Archbishop Parker. I’d been taught how to explain all those while I was at college. No, it was something deeper than all that. *I couldn’t understand why God had made the world at all*” (38-9). Viewing Prendergast as representing “the perversion of the only order that can stop” characters like Grimes (Heath 67) is a half-truth; it would be more accurate to view Prendergast as representing the increasing perversion of an order that has no hope of establishing a just society unless it has a way of addressing the existential abyss that lies at the heart of the Dionysian. Further, the Apollonian systems governing Prendergast’s actions are not just religious but specifically Anglican, as Jeffrey Heath has acknowledged in a different context (76). Through Prendergast, Waugh suggests that Protestantism has abdicated its proper duty. As a matter of fact, in his essay on converting to Roman Catholicism published two years after *Decline and Fall*, Waugh aligns it with anarchy: “It seems to me that in the present phase of European history the essential issue is no longer between Catholicism, on the one side, and

Protestantism, on the other, but between Christianity and Chaos” (“Converted to Rome” 103). *Decline and Fall* shows Anglicanism to be one of the “religious bodies” that “are not fitted for the conflict in which Christianity is engaged” (104), so that the novel is a core text in Waugh’s exploration of what Patey has called “the cultural circumstances that led him to Rome” (55), for it articulates his early qualms with Anglicanism. That Prendergast’s bishop is unable to offer any guidance and that “the only honourable thing to do was to resign [his] living” (39) are not hopeful signs that Prendergast’s church possesses a way to resist the wave of chaos and destruction represented by the Bollingers.

Waugh satirizes the Church of England’s attempt to modernize through Prendergast, and particularly through the figure of the “Modern Churchman,” “who draws the full salary of a beneficed clergyman and need not commit himself to any religious belief” (*Decline* 188). As Meckier suggests, Waugh’s critique points to the “secularization” of the Church or “religious life” (57). But the underlying target is a process of modernization that fails to counteract the undesirable consequences of modernity. Waugh shows the Church of England modernizing its arrangement of personnel rather than providing the tools for dealing with the Dionysian – in effect, reterritorializing without revising any of the coding that necessitates change – and thus creating a way to allow those who are least fit to do so to address the Dionysian from the pulpit. The creation of Prendergast’s new role as a Modern Churchman makes for a dangerous situation by giving a faithless clergyman charge of spiritual guidance in a prison: “My bishop said he thought there was more opening for a Modern Churchman in this kind of work than in the parishes” (223). In even the most minor cases, this role requires Prendergast to deal with prisoners who view the faithless clergyman as a joke: “the criminals are just as bad as boys, I find. They pretend to make confessions and tell me the most dreadful things just to see what I’ll say” (223).

In such circumstances, it is unlikely Prendergast could provide useful spiritual guidance, so it makes sense that his services would “seem so irrelevant” (223).

But Prendergast is also endangered by his position, for among his prison flock is the “Lord’s appointed, [...] the sword of Israel [...], the lion of the Lord’s elect” (239-40), who is serving a life sentence for murdering someone he views as faithless: “Unworthy that I am, I smote the Philistine; in the name of the Lord of hosts, I struck off his head” (240). There is especial reason to be concerned for Prendergast in this situation, for the lion of the Lord’s elect views him as “no Christian” (239), and therefore ripe for smiting. The danger of the situation is further compounded by the fact that, as Prendy explains, “[t]he Governor is very modern too” (223): diagnosing the sword of Israel’s problems as “another case of the frustrated creative urge” (244), Sir Wilfred Lucas-Dockery provides him with carpentry tools, so that he can continue to practice his trade as a carpenter. What Governor Lucas-Dockery fails to realize is that, though carpentry may have been the prisoner’s profession, murder was his vocation: when Paul notes, “Dear me, you seem to think about killing a great deal,” the prisoner responds simply, “I do. It’s my mission, you see” (242). Prendergast’s horrific end by slow decapitation is thus another instance “in which Waugh satirized the modern abdication of intellectual authority that calls forth the fanatic” (McCartney 24), and his death is a suggestive window into how the novel views modernity itself, for it is a result of not only the Modern Churchman, but also the Modern Governor, and the very desire for modernization.

Prendergast’s death is not the only consequence of such processes of modernization, as much of the novel suggests a broader impending catastrophe in the form of another World War. As Patey suggests, the “[t]wo chapters about ‘school sports’ recall the playing-fields on which, according the Duke of Wellington, citizen-soldiers are trained” (63). The dark humour of

Prendergast's description of the preliminary heats invokes a collective memory of World War One: "none of the boys came back from the first race. They just disappeared behind the trees at the top of the drive. I expect they've gone to change [...]. Still, it was discouraging launching heat after heat and none coming back. Like sending troops into battle, you know" (72). The waves of troops who never return, the untrustworthy leadership, and the participants who resent that the event is put on for the purposes of those who do not have to participate: all these play on popular accounts of the Great War. That the boys opt out, disregard Prendergast's instructions, and go to change does not speak well of the discipline of the coming generation or of the nation's future ability to meet military conflict. Instead, Waugh's presentation of Llanabba's nominal "Annual School Sports" emphasizes the performative nature of the event, which only occurs to show off for the parents (57-61). Prendergast's attempt to use a starting pistol to signal the beginning of the race on the day of the Annual School Sports goes worse still, causing a casualty: "'Are you ready? One' – there was a terrific report. 'Oh, dear! I'm sorry' – but the race had begun. Clearly Tangent was not going to win; he was sitting on the grass crying because he had been wounded in the foot by Mr Prendergast's bullet" (89). Even more inadequate than the narrator's comically indifferent tone is the response of Tangent's father, Lord Circumference: "I knew that was going to happen" (89). And though Prendergast, the stand-in for a commanding officer, is drunk at his post and wounds one under his command, it is the neglect of Tangent's own parents that causes his state to deteriorate in a series of events the narrator relates in a tone sufficiently casual to capture the urgency of the parents: "Tangent's foot has swollen up and turned black" (123); "Everybody else, however, was there except Lord Tangent, whose foot was being amputated at a local nursing home" (137). We only learn about Tangent's death when his mother complains that his demise risks obscuring what she intends to be a snub: "It's maddenin'

Tangent having died just at this time [...]. People may think that that's my reason for refusin' [to attend Paul and Margot's wedding]" (198). It is doubtlessly the case that "Tangent's problem is parental neglect" and a great deal of *Decline and Fall* supports the idea that, "like the entire younger generation, he has been improperly raised" (Heath 68). The Annual School Sports calls to mind Orwell's 1941 essay, *The Lion and the Unicorn*, in which he responds to the famous but apocryphal Wellington quotation: "Probably the battle of Waterloo *was* won on the playing-fields of Eton, but the opening battles of all subsequent wars have been lost there" (304).

Drawing on the collective memory of poor and frequently dangerous leadership, and an upbringing that ignorantly or callously prepares a generation to die, *Decline and Fall* treats the children of Llanabba as an echo of the First World War, while suggesting they are being raised in a way that is making them even more ill-prepared than the last generation sent to early graves.

It soon becomes clear that the state of affairs depicted in *Decline and Fall* is not only a repetition of the First World War, but is likely to lead to the Second. As the sports progress, the adults casually discuss the usefulness of sport with reference to the inevitability of another war:

"So useful in case of a war or anything," said Paul.

"D'you think so? D'you really and truly think so? That there's going to be another war, I mean?"

"Yes, I'm sure of it; aren't you?"

"Yes, of course, I'm sure of it too.[...] Oh, yes, all over again! My wife shot her hunters rather than let them go to the army. And girls in breeches on all the farms! All over again! Who do you think it will be this time?"

"The Americans," said Paul stoutly. (86)

The mindless tone of the conversation, marked by inanity and repetitiveness, suggests that the scene does not begin as an exchange of novel ideas but rather as a performance of received knowledge so well worn that it is reduced to platitude, and, as Patey notes, “the great Duke’s maxim dwindles into Paul’s halfhearted commendation, ‘So useful in case of a war or anything’” (63). Tellingly, Lord Circumference is only interested in what war is like for those on the Homefront and is horrified only at the thought of what they – i.e., he – will suffer: girls in breeches and possibly even Americans. In fact, Paul’s not entirely serious suggestion that the Americans could be the enemies in the next war shows both the broad applicability and lack of content endemic to conversations of this sort, while also drawing attention to the British pattern of going to war with the country that threatens to supplant it as the global superpower. Of course, Paul and Lord Circumference’s agreement that surely the sporting events are good for the boys is undercut by the fact that Circumference’s son has sustained a wound that will turn out to be fatal, and the novel suggests the possibility that conversations of the above sort could turn out to be no less fatal to Peter’s generation than Prendy’s marksmanship is to Lord Tangent.

The relationship between the taxonomies Waugh satirizes and the threat of war is signalled more subtly during Paul’s first attempt to teach at Llanabba school. As well as a classic trick to pull on a new teacher, the game the students play is a metaphor for much of the rest of the novel, as the students divide themselves up into a crude taxonomy consisting of two factions that bear no relationship to objective reality:

“What is your name?” he asked, turning to the first boy.

“Tangent, sir.”

“And yours?”

“Tangent, sir,” said the next boy. Paul’s heart sank.

“But you can’t both be called Tangent.” [...]

“If it comes to that,” said Clutterbuck from the back of the room, “there is only one Tangent here, and that is me. Any one else can jolly well go to blazes.” [...]

“Well, is there any one who isn’t Tangent?”

Four or five voices instantly arose.[...]

In a few seconds the room had become divided into two parties: those who were Tangent and those who were not. Blows were already being exchanged[.] (44-5)

Despite the fact that the factions consist of members who know the classificatory scheme to be false and meaningless – with the possible exception of the real Tangent, provided he has not made himself a member of the “not Tangent” group – the two parties come to blows. Except for Clutterbuck’s, the identities of the participants in this scene are never revealed, and the students only appear to be ready to cooperate when the threat of external violence emerges in the form of Grimes and his walking stick (45). In short, the passage shows the potential for violence as a consequence of any factionalization, however dubiously grounded, as well as the threat of violence as a tool to reinforce existing taxonomies, including teacher and student.

While scholars frequently consider Otto Silenus’s “big wheel at Luna Park” speech in the novel’s penultimate chapter to be the key to the novel, it provides little more than yet another inadequate taxonomy. Silenus uses the wheel that people climb on to, hoping either to hold on, or to make it to the centre where they can stay more easily, as a metaphor to explain to Paul what “life” means:

Now you’re a person who was clearly meant to stay in the seats and sit still and if you get bored watch the others. Somehow you got onto the wheel, and you got thrown off again at once with a hard bump. It’s all right for Margot, who can cling on, and for me, at the



centre, but you're static. Instead of this absurd division into sexes they ought to class people as static and dynamic. (283)

It is too easy to argue that, "like Silenus, Waugh believes that people fall into two types: the static and the dynamic, the Apollonian and the Dionysiac – or, to phrase it differently, men of taste and men of the world" (Heath 76). Despite Silenus's insistence to the contrary, "static and dynamic" is even more limited and arbitrary a binary than "this absurd division into sexes," and "static and dynamic" scarcely seems better than the other modes of classification the novel has already problematized: "Leading School, First-rate School, Good School, and School"; "Education discontinued for personal reasons" and "sent down for indecent behaviour"; or, for that matter, "those who were Tangent and those who were not." As Meckier argues, this insistence on static and dynamic "simply creates a new category for forces nothing can contain" (62).<sup>98</sup>

In addition, there are reasons not to equate the Apollonian, especially as it appears in *Decline and Fall*, with the "static," for while the novel's Dionysian characters are more active, their subjectivity is, if anything, more static (i.e. stable) than Paul's, just as Paul's own subjectivity is dynamic (i.e. changeable and unstable) as a consequence of being governed by the Apollonian taxonomies that serially sort individuals into distinct roles. As Lynch asserts in relation to Silenus's approach, "Waugh's point was exactly the opposite – that real people are too complex to be crowded into such neat patterns" (382). In a novel dominated by unsatisfactory schemes for dividing and sorting humans, Silenus's speech appears to be little more than yet another example of the discourses that threaten society by arbitrarily classifying people into

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<sup>98</sup> See also McCulloch NP, and Gorra 204.

dangerously simplified categories without addressing the underlying social conditions that enable such taxonomies.

Scholars also attempt to make sense of the end of the novel by using it to cast *Decline and Fall* as something approaching a bildungsroman, arguing that Paul has meaningfully grown or improved as a result of his experiences and Silenus's advice; and Paul is more static at the end of the novel, and the novel does flirt with the idea that Paul's lot in life has been improved, at least insofar as he has found a stable and sustaining subject position. As the penultimate chapter ends, Paul seems to have embraced his designation as "static," living the life of "a person who was clearly meant to stay in the seats and sit still" by resuming at Scone College under an assumed identity with his own name. Further, Paul's response to a lecturer on church history does initially suggest that he has finally found his place in society, for he is able to use an Apollonian system to escape the inconsistencies of the modern world: "There was a bishop in Bithynia, Paul learned, who had denied the Divinity of Christ, the immortality of the soul, the existence of good, the legality of marriage, and the validity of the Sacrament of Extreme Unction. How right they had been to condemn him!" (288). While Paul's endorsement of an act of condemnation may not seem to be the mark of a meaningful improvement, and although the subject matter is strikingly antiquarian, the Bithynian bishop denied foundational discourses, and Paul's response at least shows an ability to hold beliefs that will allow him to be more than a Prendergast-style "Modern Churchman." Additionally, though "Waugh impishly avoids saying [...] that as an *Anglican* ordained, Paul is as heretical as the deviants he so curtly dismisses" (Heath 76), Paul's antiquarianism at least gives him access to Church doctrine prior to the Protestant Reformation.

The suggestion that Paul's return to Scone College represents his growth by showing him to have finally found a satisfactory station in life is first undercut, however, when Peter appears, suffering as a consequence of his upbringing. Peter is now a member of the Bollinger Club who, in the words of Paul's new friend, Stubbs, "seems to be going a bit fast for his age" (289). Peter visits Paul "dressed in the bottle-green and white evening coat of the Bollinger Club" with "his face flushed and his dark hair slightly disordered," and confesses to Paul, "I've been rather angry with you, you know" (290). In keeping with his membership in the Dionysian horde whose locust-like destruction that initiated Paul's misadventures, Peter is obviously drunk, and when he asks for a drink, Paul notes that he "seem[s] to have had a good many already" and is "drinking rather a lot these days" (290). The roots of the drinking become explicit when Peter clarifies that he has been upset "about Margot and the man Maltravers and everything" (290). Though he agrees that Paul is not "much to blame" (290), Peter is angry because Paul was simply "part of it all" (291). Tellingly, when Peter appears in Waugh's next novel, *Vile Bodies* (1930), he has a troubled relationship with his mother and stepfather, and is characterized by a forlorn alcoholism: "I wonder where Peter Pastmaster is?... He never stays to Margot's parties... he was at dinner, of course, and, my dear, *how* he drank" (83). As one of the Bright Young Things, the bar for alcoholism is set exceedingly high, and the fact that Lady Throbbing finds Peter's alcohol consumption noteworthy is not a positive sign.

The drunken conversation that continues in Paul's room then foregrounds the conditions that will soon lead Peter to this troubled state, emphasizing the personal toll of the events of the novel:

"Paul, I think it was a mistake you ever got mixed up with us; don't you? We're different somehow. Don't quite know how. Don't think that's rude, do you, Paul?"

“No, I know exactly what you mean. You’re dynamic, and I’m static.”

“Is that it? Expect you’re right. Funny thing you used to teach me once; d’you remember? Llanabba – Latin sentences, *Quominus* and *Quin*, and the organ; d’you remember?”

“Yes, I remember,” said Paul.

“Funny how things happen. You used to teach me the organ; d’you remember?”

“Yes, I remember, said Paul.”

“And then Margot Metroland wanted to marry you; d’you remember?”

“Yes,” said Paul.

“And then you went to prison, and Alastair – that’s Margot Metroland’s young man – and Metroland – that’s her husband – got you out; d’you remember?”

“Yes,” said Paul, “I remember.”[...]

“Paul, do you remember a thing you said once at the Ritz – Alistair was there – that’s Margot Metroland’s young man, you know – d’you remember? I was rather tight then too. You said, ‘Fortune, a much-maligned lady.’ D’you remember that?”

“Yes,” said Paul, “I remember.”

“Good old Paul! I knew you would. Let’s drink to that now; shall we? How did it go? Damn, I’ve forgotten it. Never mind. I wish I didn’t feel so ill.”

“You drink too much, Peter.”

“Oh, damn, what else is there to do? (291-2)

The catechism of shared memory – with the repetition of “d’you remember...,” “yes, I remember” – asserts the importance of personal memory and the power of shared memory for establishing meaningful social bonds, while also suggesting that it is not enough for each simply

to remember the same events: these memories must become discursive to seem meaningful. Though the passage opens with a reassertion of the static/dynamic binary, Peter's unhappiness as one of the Bollingers hints that the distinction between static and dynamic might be more descriptive of the subject positions Paul and Peter actually occupy than diagnostic of their intrinsic natures. By referring to his mother exclusively as Margot Metroland and repeatedly acknowledging her serial infidelity, Peter foregrounds the subject position she now occupies – having married Maltravers, who then became Viscount Metroland (280) – and her insincerity, rather than his biological relationship with her, emphasizing that this marriage has increased the distance between them.

At the same time, Peter's assertion of small details of his and Paul's shared memories challenges the pre-fabricated taxonomies that make sense of the world without reference to the details that lead to or resist initial classification. Of course, Peter here serves as a representative of his generation, showing the damage done to members of his generation by their elders. But this conversation is, nonetheless, an assertion of the importance of personal experience and shared memory: though it still emphasizes the relationship between the personal and political, the conversation also demonstrates that the personal is important on its own, so that no jump to the large scale is necessary to see as problematic the circumstances that have led to Peter's state.

Paul's conversation with Peter signals that all is not well at the end of the novel, and the novel closes by suggesting that the conclusion of the penultimate chapter does not mark a meaningful change in Paul's life, but merely a return to his initial subject position. *Decline and Fall* concludes by echoing Paul's opinion of the heretic Bithynian bishop, this time with regards to the Ebionites: "Peter went out, and Paul settled down again in his chair. So the ascetic Ebionites used to turn towards Jerusalem when they prayed. Paul made a note of it. Quite right to

suppress them. Then he turned out the light and went into his bedroom to sleep” (292-3).

Compared to the heretic bishop, the passage Paul is reading is concerned with a minor violation of doctrine (Meckier 73), so that Paul’s endorsement of the suppression seems less justified than in the case of the bishop. While “Paul’s final sleep implies not an escape from ‘real life’ but clearness of conscience” (Patey 73), his clearness of conscience should be seen as unsettling, following as it does immediately on the departure of the suffering and troubled young man who was nearly his step-son.

This does not necessarily imply that *Decline and Fall* is a purely negative or pessimistic response to society, however, for “unlike the characters, neither the reader nor the author remains locked inside the narrative and they may profit even if the characters do not” (Heath 79; see also Meckier 72, and Gorra 205). It is true that *Decline and Fall* does not show a society that escapes the dangers posed by the Dionysian and, to quote Fagan once more, the “creatures [that] simply do not exist” in the predominant social order; it is true that this novel does not show characters who are able to overcome the bounds of their society to grow in meaningful ways; yet it is also true that *Decline and Fall* does make the problems that plague this society discursive, and gestures towards a meaningful Apollonian representation of these Dionysian forces. Like *Mother Wales*, the popular history Fagan eventually writes about the Welsh, *Decline and Fall* may not be an encyclopedic catalogue of the types of beings that exist along the lines of Borges’s *Celestial Emporium of Benevolent Knowledge*, or an expansive account of the conditions of society’s downfall on the scale of Edward Gibbon’s *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*; but Waugh’s novel, like Fagan’s history, at least attempts to respond to gaps in the prevailing taxonomies by making discursive that which had previously seemed unthinkable.

Waugh's treatment of the compulsory fluid subjectivity on display in *Decline and Fall* is also present in his *Sword of Honour* trilogy. The war that *Decline and Fall* implies will follow from society's absolute dependence on and aggressive enforcement of discourses with no clear referents has arrived at the beginning of *Sword of Honour*, so that Waugh's late trilogy shows a civilization still endangered by the same delusions on display in his first novel. Further, while the response to *Decline and Fall* is limited to critiquing a civilization that tyrannically enforces (de/re)territorializations that are at once sealed and wholly contingent on fickle coding, *Sword of Honour* offers more tangible hope: a subject position that is sufficiently stable and rooted in historically contiguous assemblages to be able to provide a way to escape modern fluid subjectivity.

### Multivalent Emergence in the *Sword of Honour* Trilogy

The fifth and last type of novel of emergence is the most significant one. In it man's individual emergence is inseparably linked to historical emergence. Man's emergence is accomplished in real historical time, with all of its necessity, its fullness, its future, and its profoundly chronotopic nature. In the four preceding types, man's emergence proceeded against the immobile background of the world, ready-made and basically quite stable.[...] In such novels as *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, *Simplicissimus*, and *Wilhelm Meister*, however, human emergence is of a different nature. It is no longer man's own private affair. He emerges *along with the world*, and he reflects the historical emergence of the world itself. He is no longer within an epoch, but on the border between two epochs, at the transition point from one to the other. This transition is accomplished in and through him. He is forced to become a new, unprecedented type of human being. What is happening here is precisely the emergence of a new man. (Mikhail Bakhtin, "The *Bildungsroman* and Its Significance in the History of Realism" 23)

Waugh's project in the three novels that form the *Sword of Honour* trilogy – *Men at Arms*, *Officers and Gentlemen*, and *Unconditional Surrender*<sup>99</sup> – is too conservative for Bakhtin's description of the most developed class of novel of emergence to ring true: though man "emerges along with the world" in these novels, the emergent men – Ivor Claire, Trimmer, and Ian Kilbannock, to name a few – are generally shown to be morally corrupt frauds. Their strategies for survival are rejected in favour of the familial mode of Catholic subjectivity Guy Crouchback finally accepts. Though Guy's final role may seem more residual than emergent, Waugh's emphasis on Guy's place in a changing world nonetheless situates him as Waugh's emergent man.

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<sup>99</sup> *Unconditional Surrender* was published in the United States as *The End of the Battle*. These three novels would be combined and re-released in a single volume as *Sword of Honour* in 1965. In keeping with Jeffrey Heath's argument that many of the cuts Waugh makes in his 1965 recension reduce the text's complexity sufficiently that "the trilogy loses far more than it gains through the omissions" (216), my analysis will be rooted in treating the three volumes severally rather than jointly.



Throughout the trilogy, Guy's subjectivity is formed and reformed by his affiliation with multiple institutions and by his use of these institutions' histories and discursive bases. But the top-down pressures exerted on Guy are not the sole focus of *Sword of Honour*; by historicizing assemblages on each of these scales, Waugh shows family, Church, state, and continent to be on their own developmental trajectories, so that Guy's becoming is inseparable from that of institutions and assemblages operating on a variety of spatiotemporal scales. Whereas *Decline and Fall* shows a nearly schizophrenic degree of fluid subjectivity as a viable way of surviving the modern world, *Sword of Honour* presents a better alternative: Guy's final subject position as head of the Crouchback family remains based on relationality and navigation of multiple assemblages operating on various spatiotemporal registers, but as a complex mode of Catholic subjectivity, it emphasizes the ascendance of a stable subjectivity that reflects a historically grounded alliance of family and faith, to which all other subject positions are subordinated. While *Sword of Honour* retains *Decline and Fall*'s concern with subjective fracture and fluidity, Waugh's final novels form a multivalent bildungsroman that historicizes some of the origins of such fracture and offer a response to the crisis presented in his first novel: a type of subjectivity that can draw on deep historical roots to provide a meaningful life in the emerging modern world.

### **Family and the Failure of Corps Subjectivity in *Men at Arms***

Effectively Waugh's longest single narrative, the *Sword of Honour* trilogy begins by setting the terms of both the ongoing historical processes and the complex frameworks of subjectivity at work throughout the three novels, and thus it establishes the bases for Guy's multivalent bildungsroman. At the opening of *Men at Arms*, the existing foundations of Guy's subjectivity have resulted in personal paralysis and stagnation. As well as emasculating him,

Guy's divorce has made it impossible to act in accordance with the expectations placed on him in his various roles as son, ex-husband, heir, Englishman, and Catholic. With the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, Guy sees military service as a way to regain his masculinity and escape paralysis, for martial subjectivity seems to offer a way to act that synthesizes – or at least neatly subordinates – his other modes of subjectivity. While it becomes apparent that Guy's martial subjectivity will prove an inadequate means of redemption, the story of Guy's personal development is framed with reference to the larger spatiotemporal scales within which the groups of which he is a member have meaning. His failures in all of these roles signal assemblages in crisis – groups which are governed by discourses that are – or are at risk of becoming – hollow. Despite their apparent stability, these assemblages are shown to be as relational and defined by their ongoing becoming as is Guy. Since *Men at Arms* is the first of the three novels that make up the *Sword of Honour* trilogy, it does not provide the end result of the developments on any of these scales. Yet, Guy's development in the first volume – from faith in the redemptive power of martial subjectivity to a loss of faith in the command structure – sets up the inadequacies of martial subjectivity while also exploring the historical and discursive bases of the institutions and assemblages that will provide him with a foothold in subsequent novels.

Guy Crouchback's experiences in *Men at Arms* signal the relationship between the protagonist's development and the necessary but difficult negotiation of family, Church, social network, and state. The stakes of such a negotiation become clear when one recognizes the histories of these assemblages and the trajectories of their growth. Unlike Paul Pennyfeather, whose backstory prior to his being assaulted by the Bollingers is minimal, Guy Crouchback is given such a detailed backstory that his family is shown to be a historicized assemblage that has long identified itself by its relationship to the Catholic Church. Though *Men at Arms*

immediately names its protagonist, it begins almost Biblically, not describing Guy, but his ancestors. The activities of Guy's grandparents are defined by the symbolic importance of their audience with the Pope – an honour resulting from their place in the history of English

Catholicism:

When Guy Crouchback's grandparents, Gervase and Hermione, came to Italy on their honeymoon, French troops manned the defenses of Rome, the Sovereign Pontiff drove out in an open carriage and Cardinals took their exercise side-saddle on Pincian Hill.

Gervase and Hermione were welcomed in a score of frescoed palaces. Pope Pius received them in private audience and gave his special blessing to the union of two English families which had suffered for their Faith and yet retained a round share of material greatness.[...] Forebears of both their names had died on the scaffold. The City, lapped now by the tide of illustrious converts, still remembered with honor its old companions in arms. (3)

These opening paragraphs emphasize the historical and spatial scales on which events in the novel should be considered, but also the supremacy of Catholic subjectivity to earlier members of the Crouchback family. The Crouchbacks maintained "a priest through all the penal years" (3) – a period initiated by Elizabeth I in 1559, and not formally relaxed until George III, beginning in 1778 – at their homestead at Broome, and somehow managed to remain part of England's landed gentry, maintaining uninterrupted possession of a tract of land measuring at least 10 kilometres across. That the family has managed to keep its lands and status despite the execution of individual family members under laws that also enabled state forfeiture of property from Catholics suggests a history of successfully negotiating a fraught relationship between Church

and state. The timing of Gervase and Hermione's audience with the pope emphasizes for a second time the conflict between Church and state, and it draws attention to the involvement of the Roman Catholic Church in international politics: though the final stage of the relaxation of England's penal laws occurred about thirty years before their wedding with the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829,<sup>100</sup> the presence of French troops in Rome suggests Pope Pius IX gives the couple his personal blessing during a period that sees the fall of the Papal States and the Catholic Church's loss of political control of Rome – for these troops would only have been present between the 1849 French siege of Rome and 1870, when the Franco-Prussian war caused French troops to be finally withdrawn from Italy, shortly after which the young Kingdom of Italy captured Rome.<sup>101</sup> The fact that the couple seeks Pope Pius's blessing at all reinforces the importance of Catholicism to them, as to prior and subsequent generations of Crouchbacks, while the historical setting of their audience with the Pope emphasizes national and religious identities as being bound to the historical shift from Christendom to Europe.

When the novel returns to the present, Waugh establishes Guy's inadequacy in relation to the Crouchbacks and their faith: this historicized representation of Guy's family points to the heritage that Guy does not embody. The family's Italian house in Santa Dulcina delle Rocce was originally built out of fondness for the site where Gervase and Hermione successfully consummated their marriage (4). Its current occupant, Guy, is a parody of his ancestors: the

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<sup>100</sup> For a breakdown of the hardships Catholics endured under the penal laws and the path to emancipation, see Stephanie A. Mann's *Supremacy and Survival: How Catholics Endured the English Reformation*, and M. D. R. Leys' *Catholics in England, 1559-1829: A Social History*.

<sup>101</sup> For classic accounts of the events leading to the 1870 Italian capture of Rome, see Raffaele De Cesare's *The Last Days of Papal Rome: 1850-1870* (especially 368-460), and The O'Leary's *The Making of Italy* (in particular, 369-80, 419-58, and 489-527). For a more contemporary account, see Derek Beales and Eugenio F. Biagini's *The Risorgimento and the Unification of Italy* (especially 150-62).

divorced Guy lives in Castello Crouchback<sup>102</sup> in a state “of dry and negative chastity which even the priests fe[el] to be unedifying” (13), and his divorce makes it impossible for him to remarry within the Church, so that he could never again seek the Papal blessing bestowed on his grandparents. In contrast to his grandparents’ successful tour of Italy, Guy is “not loved, [...] either by his household or in the town” and seems to be unique in being seen by the locals as “not *simpatico*[,]” so that even though he is “accepted and respected” (11), his identity is not meaningfully shaped by membership in the community of Santa Dulcina, which cannot sustain him. In this way, Guy fails to live up to the example set by his grandparents, as a husband and a member either of the Catholic Church or of Santa Dulcina. These failures lead to a retreat from faith: “Guy found it easy to confess in Italian. He spoke the language well but without nuances.[...] Into that wasteland where his soul languished he need not, could not, enter. He had no words to describe it. There were no words in any language. There was nothing to describe, merely a void” (9). The indescribability of Guy’s pain suggests a deep and dangerous Dionysian suffering;<sup>103</sup> his unwillingness to use the language that would allow him to come close to expressing the nature of this suffering suggests that Guy’s faith is not satisfying its most important spiritual and psychological roles.

Guy finally escapes this dangerous condition by means of a spatial and ideological relocation. “[T]he headlines announcing the Russian-German alliance” (6) function as a call to take up arms and a means of staunching his prolonged exsanguination: “Eight years of shame and loneliness were ended. For eight years Guy, already set apart from his fellows by his own

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<sup>102</sup> The property was originally named “Villa Hermione” by Gervase, but now called “Castello Crouchback” in accordance with the habits of the residents of Santa Dulcina (6), emphasizing the primacy of patrilineal inheritance – a central theme to the trilogy.

<sup>103</sup> Likewise, Gallagher argues, “In some respects Waugh’s ‘apathy’ and sense of ‘emptiness’ was akin to that of modern man in a meaningless universe” (“Humanizing” 34).

deep wound, that unstaunched internal draining away of life and love, had been deprived of the loyalties which should have sustained him” (7). As Jeffrey Heath puts it, “[a]s an expatriate, Guy is severed from his native land, from his family, and from his English Catholic faith” (217). The decision to take up arms gives Guy a reason to return “to his own country to serve his King” (6), which functions as an honourable exit from a stagnant and sterile combination of familial and local subjectivity in Santa Dulcina.

Nevertheless, the ideological relocation behind Guy’s return to England is ultimately driven by his flawed attempt to view the Russian-German alliance as the consolidation of the modern world’s two great antagonists into a personification of abstract forces that can finally be fought and defeated: “The enemy at last was in plain view, huge and hateful [...]. It was the Modern Age in Arms” (7). Such a personification is one of the senses in which, as D. Marcel DeCoste notes, “the trilogy [...] demonstrates Guy’s eagerness to heal himself by the taking up of arms to be a matter of devotion to chimeras, fictions of martial honor which he takes as a means to personal salvation” (13). In terms of assemblage, Guy’s error is defining his subjectivity in opposition to an apparent assemblage that is shown not to be a valid historical actor. But even though his motivations are rooted in a dubious desire to battle the embodiment of an abstraction, Guy’s departure remains important as his first attempt to resituate himself in relation to historically meaningful institutions, as this is the first step in Guy’s historical emergence aligning itself with the continued historical emergence of the Crouchback family, the Church, and Europe.

The conflict between the pressure Guy faces to remarry and the inability to do so doubly threatens the continuation of the Crouchback family line by pitting physical against spiritual continuity. Guy’s non-Catholic brother-in-law, Arthur Box-Bender, sees it as “Guy’s plain duty to marry again, preferably someone with money” (15). Such a violation of faith and family

tradition seems so unthinkable to Guy, though, that even the termination of the Crouchback name is preferable. But as the youngest son, the burden of becoming the head of the family and carrying on its name was not initially Guy's, and his inability to remarry is a threat to the continuation of the family only because Guy's two older brothers have already failed to produce an heir. It is ironic that Guy would attempt to redeem himself by means of participation in a European war, given the roots of his suffering in a series of larger-scale assemblages that converged as a result of WWI: the failure of the eldest son, Gervase – named for his grandfather – was a result of his having been “picked off by a sniper his first day in France” (14) before he could have children of his own. In this way, the Great War is responsible for the first threat posed to familial continuity, and is the historic tragedy that incites one of the trilogy's central conflicts. It is only when the next son, Ivo, went “stark mad” and starved himself to death (14) that the burden of carrying on the family name fell to the youngest son, Guy, “at just that time [that his own life] was plunged in disaster” (14): when his wife, Virginia, “informed him that she had fallen deeply in love with an acquaintance of theirs named Tommy Blackhouse” (15). As Robert Sherron points out, “the sacrament of marriage is *communal* in nature” (NP), and Guy's divorce is also communal – not only because it is brought about as a result of Guy's wife leaving him for a mutual acquaintance. The collective trauma of modernity, particularly in the form of global conflict, is traced on personal, familial, and religious scales, as contemporary history works to pit the Crouchback family's survival against its historic place in a community of faith.

That Guy's is a flawed image of himself, his family, and England is evident at once when he returns to England and begins attending Bellamy's – which represents Guy's English social connections in microcosm, and is unable to provide him with the community he lacked in Santa Dulcina or a path to a military posting. Though “Guy's family had always belonged” (19) to

Bellamy's,<sup>104</sup> his presence in the club is not viewed in terms of this historical membership, but only with reference to his ex-wife: "You'll never guess who he is. Virginia Troy's first husband.[...] This chap was before Tommy. Can't remember his name.[...] Tommy took her from him, then Gussie had her for a bit, then Bert Troy picked her up when she was going spare" (19). Though his roots in Bellamy's are not acknowledged, the club becomes Guy's base for a letter-writing campaign undertaken in the hope that one of his neglected acquaintances will be able to arrange a place for him as a soldier in a military body. Though Guy is not the only member who regularly attends Bellamy's in an ongoing effort to find a posting, this group of martial suitors fails to provide Guy with either posting or meaningful community, for the other members do not share his view of the purpose of the war. When Guy is indignant about Russia's invasion of Poland – which, to Guy, is a renewed call to arms – he finds "no sympathy among these old soldiers" (23), who are uninterested in waging war on the basis of Guy's abstractions: "My dear fellow, we've quite enough on our hands as it is. We can't go to war with the whole world" (23). While Guy is resuming a family tradition by attending Bellamy's, he remains isolated at the club – no more than a curiosity, whose odd motivations prevent him from finding a sustaining community.<sup>105</sup>

Community and legitimacy in relation to Guy's personal, familial, and national identity first become located within a single mode of subjectivity when Guy finally succeeds in attaching himself to the Royal Corps of Halberdiers. This posting comes about not as a result of his activities at Bellamy's, but through his father's friendship with Major Tickeridge (43).

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<sup>104</sup> The fact that Guy recognizes "many familiar faces but no friends" (19) sets Bellamy's up as a parallel to the Catholic Church, a social institution that Guy remains a member of out of little more than empty tradition, but has not participated in since his divorce.

<sup>105</sup> Although club membership is not a sufficient means to salvation in itself, it is the first step from isolation towards having a meaningful place in a sustaining community. Though Guy's place in Bellamy's is under negotiation throughout the trilogy, he remains a member to the end, and he does find a way to bring club membership into line with the stable subjectivity he has achieved by the end of the third volume.



Significantly, Guy initially struggles with the codes of the military assemblage, as is signaled through his initial inability to return the Major's toast: while Tickeridge's wife and Mr Crouchback echo the Major's "Here's how," "Guy could only manage an embarrassed grunt" (41). Whereas Mr Crouchback's "complete serenity" (41) while toasting implies admiration, Guy's "embarrassed grunt" suggests only inarticulate unease.

Guy recognizes his inability to participate as he ought to have, though, and he attempts to more appropriately code his behaviour. The Prologue ends with Guy wondering, "Why couldn't I say 'Here's how' to Major Tickeridge? My father did. Gervase would have. Why couldn't I?" (44), suggesting Guy views his breach of protocol in terms of his role in the Crouchback family. As the first Halberdier Guy has contact with, Major Tickeridge's greeting also takes on regimental significance, and separated only by a page break and a heading, Book One begins with Guy rectifying his error:

"Here's how," said Guy.

"Cheers," said Apthorpe.

"Look here, you two, you'd better have those drinks on me," said Major

Tickeridge[.](45)

Guy here acts in accordance both with his role as the current heir apparent – by behaving as he believes Gervase would have – and with his role as a new member of the Halberdiers. As DeCoste has noted, "[i]t is here, after all, and with Apthorpe, that Guy first becomes *simpatico*" (133), suggesting that this community early seems able to provide Guy with some of what had been missing from his place in Santa Dulcina.

Because it sets him up as an apparently viable representative of both the Crouchback family and the Halberdiers, Guy's military subjectivity would seem to reconnect him to

meaningful historical traditions. However, as martial subjectivity increasingly threatens to undermine Guy's familial subjectivity, his membership in the Halberdiers comes to signal the inadequacy of the military as a sustaining community. The first problem is that Guy's affiliation with the Halberdiers is predicated on familial terms, as is evident by the time Guy and Apthorpe, due to their relatively advanced age, become known as "the two 'Uncles'" (58) to all the other trainees. Guy's feelings for the Corps have by this point become strikingly familial: "Guy loved Major Tickeridge and Captain Bosanquet. He loved Apthorpe. He loved the oil-painting over the fireplace of the unbroken square of Halberdiers in the desert. He loved the whole Corps deeply and tenderly" (58).<sup>106</sup> It is significant, then, that Guy soon begins to feel as though, during his training, he is "experiencing something he had missed in boyhood, a happy adolescence" (50), for this signals his time with the Halberdiers as supplanting his actual upbringing, while the remainder of the trilogy will frequently demonstrate the emptiness of the military as a substitute for family.

Just as importantly, while Guy's "early success at the Halberdier barracks is directly linked to a strong sense of stability and tradition" (MacLeod 70), the identity the Corps offers him is grounded in a discourse strikingly at odds with historical reality. This is apparent from the institutional collective memory the Drill Sergeant draws on as a routine part of Halberdier training:

"The Royal Corps of Halberdiers was first raised by the Earl of Essex, for service in the Low Countries in the reign of Queen Elizabeth. It then bore the name of the Earl of

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<sup>106</sup> During this period, Guy's military service also becomes conflated with his faith, as is shown by Guy's evening prayers while in training: "In youth he had been taught to make a nightly examination of conscience and an act of contrition. Since he had joined the army this pious exercise had become confused with the lessons of the day" (63).

Essex's Honorable Company of Free Halberdiers. What other sobriquets has it earned, Mr Crouchback?"

"‘The Copper Heels,’ and the ‘Applejacks,’ Sergeant."

"Right. Why the ‘Applejacks,’ Mr Sarum-Smith?"

"Because after the Battle of Malplaquet a detachment of the Corps under Halberdier Sergeant-Major Breen were bivouacked in an orchard when they were surprised by a party of French marauders whom they drove away by pelting them with apples, Sergeant." (52)

Tellingly, the history of the Royal Corps of Halberdiers, like the Penal Years, originate with Queen Elizabeth I, so that Corps history is juxtaposed to Crouchback family history. Not unlike the conversation between Paul and Peter at the end of *Decline and Fall*, the question/response structure of this exchange reinforces a shared account of the past – in this case, forcing the new Halberdiers to routinely recite the Corps' version of history reinforces Corps collective memory. Such routine recollection justifies individual identity by grounding Halberdier nicknames in historical events, so that being a party to Corps collective memory is quite explicitly part of belonging to the Halberdiers. Yet, the regiment's version of the September 11, 1709, Battle of Malplaquet as a gleeful apple fight that resulted in a childish nickname – the "Applejacks" – represents a dubiously selective view of a battle that ended with an only nominal British victory, in which Marlborough retained the battlefield but his Corps suffered twice the number of the casualties as the French.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Davies characterizes the battle of Malplaquet as a "‘very murdering’ but indecisive battle," and points to the Marshal du Villars' statement to Louis XIV, "One more victory like that for your enemies, Sire, and they will all be finished" (Quoted in Davies 625).

What emerges from this regimental account of the past is a satire of military order as it represents a narrative of identity rooted more in childish stories and exaggerated poses than in meaningful social and personal roles. The viability of Halberdier subjectivity is repeatedly called into question during Guy's training. That Halberdier subjectivity involves dubious memorialization is first signaled by the setting of elementary training at Kut-al-Imara – a former boarding school, its name a misspelling of Kut al Amara, the location of the Siege of Kut (1915-16).<sup>108</sup> Here, the officers continue the parody of their childhoods by sleeping in “quarters [that] had plainly been the boys’ dormitories” each of which is “named after a battle in the First War. His was *Paschendael*. He passed the doors of *Loos*, *Wipers* (so spelled) and *Anzac*” (105).<sup>109</sup> The real threats obscured by this repetition of childhood are indicated by the arrival of the sadistic new Brigadier, Ben Ritchie-Hook (134), who conceives of the “perfect force” as something that is “expended” in a single offensive and, despite “reinforcements and promotions,” is “never the same again” (79). The questionable effect this second childhood has on Guy is demonstrated by his failed attempt to make himself over, modelling his appearance after Apthorpe and Ritchie-Hook, with a moustache Virginia describes as “perfectly awful” and a monocle that renders his appearance “comic” (146). Though these events show Guy’s “whole new calling [to be] a masquerade” (147), his martial subjectivity is powerful enough to threaten the familial subjectivity that will increasingly be shown to be preferable throughout the trilogy.

Waugh's depiction of the tenacity of this ideological position enables a sustained emphasis on the hollowness of such collective identities as martial masculinity, particularly in

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<sup>108</sup> Also important is the fact that, at Kut-al-Imara, the two halves of the Halberdiers – the “Depot Batch” and the “Barrack Batch” (102) – meet, in an assemblage that is unsettling because of “their resemblance at every point” which undermines the perceived individuality of each member of Guy's Depot Batch: “To Guy it seemed that there were just twice too many young officers at Kut-al-Imara House. They were diminished and caricatured by duplication” (108).

<sup>109</sup> See Trout (136) for further discussion of the significance of the names of the rooms.

relation to the grander temporal scales, as is evident in the pivotal scene in which Guy attempts to reassert his masculinity by seducing his ex-wife. Waugh inscribes multiple modes of temporality onto Guy's attempted Valentine's Day seduction of Virginia, starting with the saint's history before moving to the backdrop of war from which Guy is ironically distanced:

Februato Juno, dispossessed, has taken a shrewish revenge on that steadfast clergyman, bludgeoned and beheaded seventeen centuries back, and set him in the ignominious role of patron to killers and facetious lovers.[...]

The newspapers were still full of the *Altmark*, now dubbed the 'Hell Ship.' There were long accounts of the indignities and discomforts of the prisoners, officially designed to rouse indignation among a public quite indifferent to those trains of locked vans still rolling east and west from Poland and the Baltic, that were to roll on year after year bearing their innocent loads to ghastly unknown destinations. And Guy, oblivious also, thought all that winter's day of his coming meeting with his wife. (150)

Guy's pursuit is undertaken without reference to the historical events that necessitate military involvement, as references to unfolding history provide a stark contrast to Guy's action. Where he strolls the streets waiting to take Virginia to bed, the "Phoney War" carries on and the Holocaust sends "innocent loads to ghastly unknown destinations."<sup>110</sup> Guy's actions are also contrasted to the perspective on historical events suggested by the temporal scale of the Catholic Church. But where references "to the religious services and feast days of the Catholic Church serve as a gentle reminder of the supernatural order that, Waugh feels, persists amid the chaos of war" (G. Phillips 110), Church time is not only functioning in terms of a circular liturgical

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<sup>110</sup> *Men at Arms* is filled with such inscriptions of historical events, so that, for instance, "Apthorpe's absurdities contrast with the increasing gravity of the military situation. As Apthorpe and Dunn squabble over the case of the boot, the British army is on the run in France" (Heath 226).

calendar that overlays Apollonian order onto that chaos. The gesture towards the origins of the feast – the martyring of Saint Valentine, and his feast day supplanting a pre-existing pagan holiday, Juno Februata – also speaks to an often-ignored history. The consequences of this history continue to shape the present, for as a consequence, Saint Valentine has been given the “ignominious role of patron to killers and facetious lovers,” and his feast has gained enormous secular importance. Though himself a facetious lover on Valentine’s Day who acknowledges the feast day by going to mass (150), Guy’s actions are no more in accordance with the Catholic than the martial historical register, here or in the remainder of *Men at Arms*. Those registers will undermine the illusions Guy acquires through the Halberdiers as he later notices cracks in the larger martial order that would ground his subjectivity.

As important as Guy’s progressing disillusionment, however, is his subsequent fetishizing of the bottom-up or local activities that seem to offer an alternative to top-down or authoritative command structures. The significance of this micro-scale activity first appears at the same time as a larger-scale activity, “[t]he great promised event, ‘When the brigade forms’” (193). On the night before the arrival of rank and file soldiers, following a concerted effort by Halberdier officers to set up camp, Guy reflects on soldiers’ ability to reassert or generate order:

He was thinking of this strange faculty of the army of putting itself into order. Shake up a colony of ants and for some minutes all seems chaos. The creatures scramble aimlessly, frantically about; then instinct reasserts itself. They find their proper places and proper functions. As ants, so soldiers.

In the years to come he was to see the process at work again and again, sometimes in grim circumstances, sometimes in pleasant domesticity. Men unnaturally removed from wives and family began at once to build substitute homes, to paint and furnish, to

make flower-beds and edge them with white-washed pebbles, to stitch cushion-covers on lonely gun-sites. (198)

Top-down military strategy functions, here, as an agent of chaos – as the hands shaking up a formicarium. Macro-level commands upset the status quo, and order is restored by the insectile, domestic instincts of the soldiers. Far from producing rational and efficient results, commands in *Men at Arms* are a “‘flap,’ of alternating order and chaos” in which “Chaos came from without in sudden, unexplained commands and cancellations; order grew from within as company, battalion and brigade each rearranged itself for the new unexpected task” (239).

There is slippage throughout the text as to the precise scale from which order emerges – in the above blocked quotation, for example, the men who have actually been arranging the camp are officers, acting at the behest of Brigadier Ritchie-Hook (195); but whether it emerges from soldiers or merely “within” a company or battalion, disorder invariably comes from above, and the best officers or soldiers can do is respond to the disorder imposed on them by completing the flap and restoring order locally. As the novel ends and Guy is ejected from the Halberdiers after being blamed for Apthorpe’s death and a failed nighttime raid on Dakar – both of which result, at least partially, from the actions of local superior officers in Guy’s Brigade (the advice of his Brigade Major and the orders of his Brigadier) – it appears that the burden for martial order falls to each soldier, as not even the officers immediately above can be relied upon.

### **The Failure of Micro-Scale Order in *Officers and Gentlemen***

*Officers and Gentlemen* begins in the context of Guy’s inadequate martial subjectivity and his increasing alienation from the military’s chain of command, but it presents two models through which Guy might still navigate the command structure that are in keeping with military discourse. The first such model is Colonel “Jumbo” Trotter, who exploits the faulty logic of the

military hierarchy to enact his will, and the second is Ivor Claire, whose aristocratic exceptionalism proves to be a dubious alternative to traditional authority. These models show the local structuring impulses on display in the trilogy to arise from liberal approximations of officer class archetypes, pointing directly to the slippage between discourse and its enactment. Paired with two levels of disastrous military action – the debacle at Crete and the Soviet Union’s shifting position in World War II – they emphasize the fact that martial subjectivity cannot redeem Guy: he “has been wrong in identifying modern warfare with a religious crusade, and most wrong in making the equation of the novel’s title” (Patey 328).

Yet, these disasters also emphasize that, though the British military bureaucracy depicted in the second novel is inadequate to the point that it seems as though “martial glory dies not in the trenches but in the office” (Trout 130), the traditional command structure is also shown to be necessary for military success. This inadequacy and necessity makes a consideration of the officer class central to *Officers and Gentlemen*, but as Guy’s models of leadership fail and the Soviet Union becomes Britain’s ally, Guy loses any sense of how he could act meaningfully within the command structure and any reason for participating in the war at all. While Guy does not find a satisfactory response to this loss of direction and purpose in *Officers and Gentlemen*, one is glimpsed when Guy completes his only satisfactory action on Crete, which is an act of Christian charity. At the end of the second volume, Catholic subjectivity remains the only possible, if not yet fully viable, strategy for Guy as Waugh illustrates the limitations of individual actions and the need for a collective integrity.

Jumbo Trotter works both to exemplify and to exploit army bureaucracy, representing a “benign, placid, irresistible weaver of red tape” (Davis 261). A veteran of WWI who has no official position in the army, Jumbo is drawn into the text by an alignment of self-serving policy



and bureaucratic incompetence that signal the institutional sources of his abilities. When it is decided that Guy will not be prosecuted for his landing on Dakar – an incidental consequence of Churchill’s intercession to get Guy’s superior officer, Ritchie-Hook, back in command (32) – Guy must be recalled to HOO HQ (Hazardous Offensive Operations Headquarters) to be reassigned. The Adjutant of the Halberdier Barracks does not want to include the address of HOO HQ because it is “on the Most Secret list,” but he does not want to refer the issue back for clarification because “it is marked ‘Immediate Action’” (32). When, after ten minutes, the Adjutant and his Sergeant-Major realize Guy will not know where to report without being given the address, and after they sit “silent and despairing” for an undisclosed amount of time, they conclude that the “correct procedure would be to send [the address] by hand of officer” (33). The unimportance of the task means they need to find an officer who has literally nothing else to do, so Jumbo is the obvious choice. Though the Adjutant eventually realizes that it would have been simpler to recall Guy to the Halberdier barracks to give him the address of HOO HQ in person, the task has already been assigned, and the Adjutant cites a desire to avoid “[o]rder, counter order, disorder” (34) as the reason for leaving the pointless task with Jumbo.

Trotter is ideally suited to navigate such dubious logic in all its military embodiments, as he exploits the social connections and knowledge of martial norms gained by a lifetime in the Halberdiers, while artfully maintaining enough ignorance about the particulars of his tasks to be able to act without knowingly violating professional obligations. His acquisition of a car illustrates his skills in exploiting faulty reasoning for personal benefit:

Never move without your bed and your next meal; that was a rule, said Jumbo.

Altogether his luggage comprised rather a handful for Halberdier Burns, his aged servant; too much to take by train, he explained to the Barrack Transport Officer. Besides, it was

the duty of everyone to keep off the railways. The wireless had said so. Trains were needed for troop movements. The transport officer was a callow, amenable, regular subaltern. Jumbo got a car. (33-4)

The ostensible rule not to travel without bed and meal would hardly seem applicable in this case. The additional fact that the purpose of his journey is to effect the movement of a troop (though, conveniently, this is not known to Jumbo) shows his rationalization to be absurd, as is the fact that Jumbo would need the assistance of a servant at all, given the pointlessness and simplicity of his task. Though obviously unnecessary, no part of Jumbo's request for a car is entirely inconsistent with Halberdier discourse. Here, as throughout *Officers and Gentlemen*, he is successful because he is able to employ the discourses used by the martial bureaucracy: to cite the right policies, to use the proper orders, and to manipulate the bureaucratic groupspeak to ensure he gets what he wants.

Jumbo's ability to manipulate the military bureaucracy in this way is shown to be invaluable throughout *Officers and Gentlemen*, and he serves to show the kinds of bureaucratic mastery Guy would need to achieve to be able to use the military to serve his own ends. The benefits of Jumbo's labours include enabling Guy to haul Apthorpe's personal effects as a result of Jumbo's acquisition of a lorry (47), Jumbo extending his mission beyond delivery of the letter (49), and Jumbo obtaining not only the Chief of Imperial General Staff's parking spot (48-9), but even printed notices for the lorry stating, "CIGS" (52) – though he stops short of having matching notices put on his car. Given the inadequacies of the chain of command, Jumbo's use of the system's multivalent stupidity against it seems like an acceptable way to operate.<sup>111</sup> When

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<sup>111</sup> In fact, the potential of such an approach to act against institutional injustice becomes clear when Jumbo rescues Mr Crouchback from the overzealous Quartering Commandant, Major Grimshawe, who plans to have him evicted from his hotel rooms at Matchet (36-40).

Tommy Blackhouse seeks an administrative officer who is “an elderly fellow who knows all the ropes and can get round the staff” (85), it is obvious not only that Jumbo is the ideal candidate for the job, but that such an officer would be useful to anyone leading a brigade. That such a cynical position is shown to be rational and necessary comes close to an absolute condemnation of the British military’s bureaucracy.

Such cynicism is embodied by Ivor Claire, whose self-serving approach to the war enables him to disregard or creatively misinterpret the spirit of orders according to whether or not he wants to follow them. His individualism is overtly associated with class privilege and conspicuous individuality, marked by his choice of outfit: “a Captain of the Blues who reclined upon a sofa, his head enveloped in a turban of lint, his feet shod in narrow velvet slippers embroidered in gold thread with his monogram,” who is “nursing a white Pekinese” with “a glass of white liqueur” beside him (55), Claire diverges from the martial stereotypes Guy has thus far encountered. “[N]ot a crusader but an infidel” (Heath 229), Claire is also a man of class and leisure whose easy aristocratic air and impressive ability on a horse draw Guy’s admiration:

Guy had seen them in Rome at the Concorso Ippico; Claire leaning slightly forward in the saddle with the intent face of a pianist, the horse precisely placing his feet in the tan, leaping easily, without scuffle or hesitation, completing a swift, faultless round, in dead silence which broke at last into a tumult of appreciation. Guy knew him, too, as a member of Bellamy’s. He should have known Guy for they had often sat opposite one another in the listless days of the preceding year and had stood together in the same group at the bar. (55)

Whereas Jacob’s poor showing in the fox hunt depicted in *Jacob’s Room* foreshadows his death in battle, Claire’s horsemanship should signify that he is a leader of men, who can guide them

“easily, without scuffle or hesitation” into “swift, faultless” action. In this light, it is not entirely surprising that Guy so idealizes Claire: “Ivor Claire, Guy thought, was the fine flower of them all. He was quintessential England, the man Hitler had not taken into account” (140). Moreover, early on, Claire “is taken as a marker of both the superiority and continuity of [...] gentlemanly ideals” (MacLeod 71). Of Guy’s club and class, but bearing no more similarity to Guy than to any other characters Guy has met, Claire seems to maintain his individuality within the military while embodying the heroic masculinity that would ensure victory against the Germans.

Though Claire’s individualism shows none of Jumbo’s manipulative mastery, it proves to be an even more dangerous alternative to the traditionally enacted chain of command, especially for the soldiers affected by his self-serving interpretation of orders. This danger is apparent when the Commando,<sup>112</sup> following a series of successful daytime rehearsals of the Crete assault on its frozen analogue, the Isle of Mugg, attempts a rehearsal on a dark night. Though Tommy is sure “[n]othing can happen for two hours or more” (104), Claire radios that his D Troop is in position almost at once and requests permission to return. This unexpected success is the result of his unusual tactics: “I hired a bus. You might call it ‘captured transport’” (105). Tellingly, Claire’s troop is the only one to succeed at all, with the other troops appearing “out of the darkness until dawn, shuffling, soaked and spiritless as stragglers on the road from Moscow” (105). The ominous echoes of one of history’s great routs, the retreat of Napoleon’s Grande Armée following his disastrous Russian Campaign (1812) – with troops starving, frozen, broken, and

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<sup>112</sup> In this context, the term “Commando” is used to refer not to a single special forces service member, as it would in a contemporary setting, but to units that would engage the Germans in types of warfare usually only carried out by guerrilla forces. As Tim Moreman notes, though “[t]he formation and idea behind the Commandos, solely organized, trained and equipped for raiding, was revolutionary in many respects for the British Army and an experiment from start to finish” (11). The idea behind such units was inspired by the Boer Commandos, “the best exponent of guerilla warfare which history could provide” (Lieutenant Colonel Dudley Clarke, who is credited with first suggesting the idea of Commandos in the context of World War Two, quoted in Moreman 9; see also Charles Messenger’s *The Commandos: 1940-1946*).

mercilessly harried by bands of Cassocks in a disaster which cost Napoleon the flower of his army<sup>113</sup> – in a group of Commandos on an unopposed island following what is essentially a map reading exercise suggests that the Troops need all the practice they can get, and bodes ill for their upcoming action on Crete.

Like Jumbo, Claire is able to use his knowledge of the collective's discourses to manipulate orders to rationalize his actions: "Claire's case was unanswerable. The Commandos were expressly raised for irregular action, for seizing tactical advantages on their own initiative. In the operation, Claire explained, there would probably be a bus lying about somewhere" (105). Tommy's retort – "In the operation that road leads through a battalion of light infantry" (105) – is useless against Claire's selective martial legalism: "Nothing about that in orders, Colonel" (106). Though "[t]he episode greatly endear[s] Claire to his own troop" and "dr[aws] Claire and Guy closer together," the other officers are angry about it, and it initiates a feud between Commando troops (106). Moreover, Claire has deprived the soldiers of the training they would need to operate effectively, and this presages and contributes to the rout at the Battle of Crete.

Indeed, on Crete, Claire's self-serving interpretation of orders exposes moral relativism and an ability to rationalize disobeying orders that is dangerous in wartime. In a conversation with Guy regarding their orders to surrender to the Germans after they have covered the retreat of the other British forces, the Captain applies a precedent from a higher-rank to himself, ignoring the purpose of a chain of command and military structure:

"The General's off in a flying-boat tonight."

"No staying with the sinking ship."

"Napoleon didn't stay with his army after Moscow." [...]

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<sup>113</sup> For a more complete overview of Napoleon's Russian Campaign, see Roberts 617-35.

“There would be no sense in the GOC sitting here to be captured.”

“None at all. No sense in any of us staying.” [...]

“I was thinking about honour. It’s a thing that changes, doesn’t it? I mean, a hundred and fifty years ago we would have had to fight if challenged. Now we’d laugh.[...] And in the next war, when we are completely democratic, I expect it will be quite honorable for officers to leave their men behind. It’ll be laid down in King’s Regulations as their duty – to keep a *cadre* going to train new men to take the place of prisoners.” (279-80)

Though Guy suggests that the GOC (General Officer Commanding) is unjustified in departing according to an archaic model of leadership, Claire justifies it as a duty with the example of Napoleon. Claire then assumes a higher rank without differentiating the role of an actual commanding officer from his own. The best he is able to come up with is that he has a duty “to keep a cadre going to train new men to take the place of prisoners” – a task of dubious importance, especially given the poor job Claire has done preparing his current force. Claire cannot finally be read in terms of “the superiority and continuity of [...] gentlemanly ideals” (MacLeod 71) because he possesses no such ideals, but merely the social position of one who may have once had them. His reliance here on gentlemanly ideals only extends their slippage, which Claire projects into the future in an attempt to justify his indefensible actions in terms of an ethical code that does not yet exist and would scarcely be an improvement.

The debacle at Crete demonstrates that such individualism, such self-serving actions, be they on the part of Trotter or Claire, cannot take the place of a meaningful chain of command. Hookforce’s “landing is impeded not by German operations, but by the attempted departure of British soldiers become a rabble” (DeCoste 140) – soldiers who “haven’t had any orders from

anyone for twenty-four hours” (*Officers and Gentlemen* 212). The second-in-command of the B Commando’s attempt to explain what happened suggests broad chaos as a result of a breakdown in command:

I don’t know much. It’s a shambles. They were moving out last night when we arrived – all the odds and sods, that is.[...] We were put under command of A Commando and rushed straight out to counter attack at dawn. That was when Prentice was killed.[...] Then we discovered that the Spaniards who were supposed to be on our flank, hadn’t shown up. And there was no sign of the people who were supposed to come through and relieve us. So we sat there for an hour being shot at from all directions. Then we moved off again. We lost A Commando. Stukas got most of our transport. We lay in the fields all day being dive-bombed. (213)

The second-in-command’s strained account testifies to disorder at multiple levels: an ad-hoc assault force in a rushed counter attack, which ends in the death of the commanding officer; the troops who are supposed to cover the flank are absent; relieving troops do not show up; Commandos are separated from one another; and intense German activity meets them at every turn. Such disorder is, to a large extent, laid at the feet of those in command, and as Heath argues, “The withdrawal from Crete dramatizes a crisis in leadership which Waugh traces to the very highest levels of authority. Episode after episode demonstrates the staggering incompetence of those who have been trained to command” (Heath 235-6).

The events on Crete challenge Guy’s belief in micro-scale military order in *Men at Arms* – that “faculty of the army of putting itself into order” compared to a colony of ants that responds to chaos by “find[ing] their proper places and functions.” Instead, as Guy and Major Hound proceed inland on Cretan roadways choked by a disorganized mob, it becomes evident the chaos

and confusion described by the second-in-command are the unavoidable local consequences of a systemic breakdown: “the road was densely filled with walking men interspersed with motor-vehicles of all kinds, lightless also, moving at walking pace. Some of the men [...] walked straight into the bonnet and mudguards. For some miles the flow of men never changed” (214-5). The primary agent of chaos here is not merely the soldiers’ own commanders, but a highly-organized German army, against which micro-level self-organization is impossible. On Crete, bottom-up order would be inadequate even if it could occur, because it could only take place on the wrong scale: it would be unable to produce the highly-ordered macro-scale counter-offensive that alone might stand a chance against the Germans. Though soldiers left to their own devices are able to bivouac and make themselves comfortable, they lack the resources to respond to an organized military force or mount an equally coordinated and effective defense.

The only meaningful martial order that is presented in *Officers and Gentlemen* is discursive, and the discursive is the level upon which the individual can operate according to the language- and rule-based bureaucracy of the British army. This is evident in “Operation Popgun,” which would partially determine the forces present on Crete and is the result of an officer’s misrepresentation of reality out of a desire to retain authority. Facing the threat of having his forces absorbed by other units, Major-General Whale, Director of Land Forces in Hazardous Offensive Operations, sees no option but to “mount an operation at once and call in the press” (144) in the hope that this will show the need to keep his forces under his authority. Whale’s plan is in line with the actions of Jumbo and Claire: it is intended to give those in power what they think they want to force them to act against their real desires and what is best for the war effort. When Whale reports on his meeting at the War Office with the ACIG (Assistant Chief of Imperial General Staff), “[t]hey’re out to do us down,” [...] [n]o one thought he meant



the Germans” (144). Clearly, Whale is more interested in battles against the initial-riddled upper echelons of the military bureaucracy than against the opposing forces.

The fact that Whale’s publicist, Ian Kilbannock, is able to manipulate not just the popular imagination but also his superior officers with his account of “Operation Popgun” highlights the macro-level effects of manipulating martial institutions, and it also calls into question the ability of command to act in accordance with reality. Though “Popgun” objectively demonstrates the ineffectiveness of Hazardous Offensive Operations, Kilbannock declares “the success of the expedition,” coaches the operation’s incompetent officer, Trimmer, on “the military version” (186) of events, and crafts an account that presents Trimmer as a hero. Whereas Trimmer had earlier utilized fluid subjectivity as a means of using the military for his own purposes in ways already familiar,<sup>114</sup> once he is useful for propaganda purposes, his identity is finalized to maximize the effect of the narrative: as Mr Crouchback puts it after reading a newspaper account, “He downs his scissors and without any fuss carries out one of the most daring exploits in military history” (189). As Kilbannock’s version of “Popgun” transforms Trimmer into a hero for public relations, by “inflating irrelevant or banal situations into high drama” (Trout 134), the account also transforms Whale’s bumbling Hazardous Offensive Operations into an apparent asset. This “demonstrates the obsolescence of Guy’s chivalric idiom by suggesting that such language only has meaning when invoked ironically” (Trout 134), while also showing “the collapse of language into an arbitrary instrument of political coercion” (135).

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<sup>114</sup> For instance, Trimmer joins a highland regiment under an assumed name, McTavish, after his departure from the Halberdiers, while simultaneously attempting to adopt a new nickname, “Ali” (61); he pretends to be a “Scottish laddie” and replaces his Lieutenant’s stars with Major’s crowns to appear more impressive while on leave (87); and he reveals his past as a cruise ship barber who went by “Gustave” when he reunites with Virginia, a long lost passenger.

Similarly, military intelligence, that celebrated oxymoron, struggles to bridge the intermediary scales between interpersonal and international activities, and consequently succumbs to delusion. Throughout *Officers and Gentlemen*, Colonel Grace-Groundling-Marchpole, “lately promoted head of his most secret department” (94), collects and catalogues dubious information – for instance, that Guy Crouchback “has been distributing subversive matter at night” (94) – under the assumption that all of the information will eventually form a complete and coherent map of reality: “Given time, given enough confidential material, he would succeed in knitting the entire quarrelsome world into a single net of conspiracy in which there were no antagonists, merely millions of men working [...] for the same end; and there would be no more war” (95). Grace-Groundling-Marchpole’s is “a paranoid vision of interlocked complexity” (Davis 268) that threatens to influence military action in significant ways, for his highly secret department “communicate[s] only with the War Cabinet and the Chiefs of Staff” (95). That this department has so far remained inactive only because Grace-Groundling-Marchpole has not yet been asked to report on the information he has collected (95) raises the question of what, if any, information his superiors are acting on. Though Grace-Groundling-Marchpole’s information remains inert in *Officers and Gentlemen*, the fact that Guy has been implicated shows the dangers of such false but explosive information, not only to Guy, but to any one of the millions of lives drawn into this web of delusion.

However much the war is affected by actions taking place on the individual, platoon, and company scales, and however much falsified and confused discourses make it difficult to act intelligently on any of these scales, the structure of the war is to a large extent determined by activities on the national and international scales. The powerful downward pressure of the Russo-British alliance, for instance, is felt on every register. When news spreads of Germany’s invasion

of the Soviet Union, it is described as “a day of apocalypse for all the world for numberless generations, and for Guy among them, one immortal soul, a convalescent Lieutenant of Halberdiers” (305). With Mrs Stitch’s insistence that “[i]t’s nice to have one ally,” the group dining with her struggles to make sense of such an immense change:

Nothing else was spoken of at luncheon – the Molotov pact, the partition of Poland, the annexation of the Baltic republics, the resources of the Ukraine, the numbers of aeroplanes, of divisions, transport and oil, Tilsit and Tolstoi, American popular opinion, Japan and the Anti-Comintern Pact – all the topics that were buzzing everywhere in the world at that moment. But Guy remained silent. (305)

From the misdeeds of the Russians, the discussion moves to practical considerations of what the Russians will contribute to the fight and what the shift will mean for Germany’s and England’s allies. The conversation even turns to Russian literature and touches on historical antecedents, such as the 1807 Treaties of Tilsit – an agreement that resulted in peace between France, Russia, and Prussia, leaving England and Sweden as Napoleon’s only opponents.<sup>115</sup> Guy’s silence highlights the personal implications of the international sphere. Already struggling to make sense of his experiences on Crete and brush with death at sea, Guy does not speak because now that England is aligned with the Soviet Union, “[t]he clear totalitarian enemy Guy sought to engage is [...] dissolved and his nation’s honorable cause is forfeit” (DeCoste 142). In short, the shift in allies undoes the possibility of redemption by honourable participation in a war he was only drawn to “when he read of the Russo-German alliance, when a decade of shame seemed to be ending in light and reason, when the Enemy was plain in view, huge and hateful, all disguise cast

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<sup>115</sup> The most famous event from this episode is the July, 1807, meeting between Napoleon and Alexander, which took place “aboard a raft on the River Niemen at Tilsit” (Davies 727). For a more detailed account of circumstances surrounding the Tilsit treaties, see Roberts (456-63).

off; the modern age in arms” (*Officers* 306). The newfound German enmity with the Soviet Union interpellates Guy as powerfully as did their alliance, though this time Guy’s response finally removes martial subjectivity from a position of primacy. This subjective change undermines any use Guy could have for utilizing strategies like Jumbo’s, Claire’s, or Kilbannock’s, for theirs are merely ways to manipulate the bureaucracy into enacting one’s will, and Guy no longer wills any form of military action now that England is allied with Russia.

As the novel draws to a close and Guy struggles to make sense of his experiences on Crete and the new shape of the war, he finds the identity disc of the dead Catholic soldier he prayed over and buried in Crete (310; see 260-1), the one act that his service has allowed him to undertake which remains consistent with his values. By sending the disc to GHQME (General Headquarters, Middle East) with the note, “Taken from the body of a British soldier killed in Crete. Exact position of grave unknown” (310), he is setting the tone for the remainder of his military service, which will become subordinated to religious service throughout *Unconditional Surrender*. Significantly, *Officers and Gentlemen* ends with Julia Stitch undermining Guy’s efforts by using her connections to have Guy sent back to England by the slowest possible route, fearing he intends to give testimony against her friend, Ivor Claire, and then by discarding the envelope with the identity disc, assuming it contains Guy’s evidence. Positioning Guy still within a dysfunctional system, Waugh suggests that, though Guy’s final allegiances are nearly set by the end of *Officers and Gentlemen*, he is no more safe from the whims of commanding officers or those with the power to manipulate the martial bureaucracy than he is free from the despair that limits his reliance on his faith.

### **Family and Faith in *Unconditional Surrender***

While the chain of command and international events become increasingly problematic throughout *Unconditional Surrender* (it remains clear the intelligence branch is delusional, and while the English people fawn over their new ally, the Soviet Union, communist agents increasingly infiltrate HOO HQ), the death of Guy's father and Virginia's confession of her pregnancy by Trimmer interpellate Guy into a form of subjectivity at once Catholic and domestic. Guy still remains an active serviceman, though, and as he attempts to use his position to accomplish a grand act of charity, it becomes evident that his martial/Catholic subjectivity remains a threat to his domestic/Catholic subjectivity. Guy's inevitable failure to use the military as a vehicle for Christian charity leads to his final disillusionment, though the novel closes with Guy assuming a final mode of subjectivity that synthesizes manifold modes by subordinating them to the mode of familial Catholicism that Guy has inherited from his father.

The monstrosity of the military and Guy's precarious place in it are indicated early in *Unconditional Surrender*. The first such signal is the placement of Guy's desk: under a "plaster reconstruction of a megalosaurus, under whose huge flanks his trestle table was invisible from the door" (23), Guy is the hidden excrement – or spawn – of a military that is gigantic and monstrous, but a mere simulation of the real specimen, capable of little more than a pantomime of force. A device called the Electronic Personnel Selector is soon put to use to eliminate the need to have humans decide who will fill which roles, further emphasizing the inhumanity of a bureaucracy that is responsible for making life and death decisions about servicemen. Ironically, the EPS only selects Guy for a mission he is actually well-suited for in error (68-9), only further emphasizing the incompetence of the bureaucracy. Such incompetence is made even more explicit when Colonel Grace-Groundling-Marchpole re-enters the narrative and acts on the

ridiculous content of his records to prevent the EPS from sending Guy to Italy – though he is tempted to let Guy go in the hopes that he may lead army intelligence “into the neo-fascist network” (160). The ludicrousness of the activities undertaken by the martial bureaucracy is emphasized most pointedly, though, in the activities taking place in “the studio” of HOO HQ, where artists are employed to construct “beaches [...] in miniature, yards and yards of them, reproducing from air-photographs miles and miles of the coast of occupied Europe” (24), but use “their ample spare time [...] building a model of the Royal Victorian Institute” (i.e. the building they occupy; 25), thus reproducing their own world “as if ad infinitum, in the model” (Trout 129). This *mise en abyme* accentuates that the bureaucracy is governed not by selfless social duty and a keen understanding of external reality, but by selfishness, narcissism, and absurdity.

The injustice and irrationality of HOO HQ pale in comparison, however, to the popular attitude towards Britain’s new ally and, in Guy’s view, its natural enemy, and this attitude degrades war effort, state, and religion alike. As “the wireless [daily] announce[s] great Russian victories while the British advance in Italy [i]s coming to a halt” (16-7), the public projects its gratitude for the Soviet Union onto the Sword of Stalingrad and “venerate[s] the sword as the symbol of their own generous and spontaneous emotion” (16-7). *Unconditional Surrender* repeatedly portrays the general public’s veneration as pseudo-religious: “As they reached the Abbey church, which many were entering for the first time in their lives, all fell quite silent as though they were approaching a corpse lying in state” (16); “They knew no formal act of veneration. They paused, gazed, breathed, and passed on” (32). As DeCoste puts it, “All Britain is, in its thirst for heroism, ready to adore the very villains that moved Guy to take up arms. Making war their religion, they commit themselves to the adoration of a dictator and the worship of artful emblems of power’s bloody supremacy” (145). Making a false idol of a gift to the ally

Guy sees as England's enemy is a degradation of Guy's beliefs, though "the heresy of the display of the Sword of Stalin [*sic*] in Westminster Abbey" (Heinimann 182) is not only religious in nature, but also national: "Cardiff, Birmingham, Sheffield, Manchester, Glasgow, and Edinburgh paid it secular honors in their Art Galleries and Guild Halls. Now, back from its tour, it reached its apotheosis, exposed for adoration hard by the shrine of St. Edward the Confessor and the sacring place of the kings of England" (17). In short, the culmination of the Sword of Stalingrad's tour in Westminster Abbey – a location uniquely imbued with imbricated national and religious importance – represents a degradation of Church *and* State, both of which are unsettlingly complicit with their degradation.<sup>116</sup>

More than honour and dignity are at issue for Britain, though, for while the public defiles its institutions in its zealous adulation of the nation's new ally, key positions in the military command structure are occupied by Soviet conspirators. Sir Ralph Brompton, formerly of the Foreign Office and now the diplomatic advisor to HOO HQ, who admits to "'red' sympathies" (35), haunts the halls of HOO HQ on a "self-imposed task of 'political indoctrination'" (25) – a task he no longer has to conceal. Sir Ralph's influence is not to be underestimated: de Souza plausibly reports to Guy during their time at No. 4 Special Training Centre that he "shouldn't be surprised if half this bus load weren't friends of Ralph Brompton's one way or another" (120). Clearly, Sir Ralph places fellow communists in sensitive positions, resulting in "a little band of British Communists that is able to infiltrate the army at various levels" (G. Phillips 128). His interference goes further, enabling him to influence policy directly:

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<sup>116</sup> Noting Westminster Abbey's role as the site of England's coronations, Heath makes a similar point by comparing Sir Roger's sword from *Men at Arms* with the Sword of Stalingrad: "In the twelfth century Sir Roger was thwarted in his desire to smite the enemy with his sword. In the twentieth century the people of England go a step further by giving away their sword, and with it, their honour" (Heath 246).

Sir Ralph Brompton had been schooled in the old diplomatic service to evade irksome duties and to achieve power by insinuating himself into places where, strictly, he had no business.[...] The chiefs of HOO considered they should be represented wherever the conduct of affairs was determined. Busy themselves in the highest circles, they willingly delegated to Sir Ralph the authority to listen and speak for them and to report to them, in the slightly lower but not much less mischievous world of their immediate inferiors.[...] Wherever those lower than the Cabinet and the Chiefs of Staff adumbrated the dismemberment of Christendom, there Sir Ralph might be found. (179)

Like Jumbo Trotter and Ivor Claire, Sir Ralph manipulates the inadequacies of those above him to achieve his ends. But while he has the familiar ability to “evade irksome duties,” Sir Ralph is unique in that he is commandeering the command structure itself, and in that his ends are explicitly political, ideological, and conspiratorial. As Davis puts it, “[t]he activities of Sir Ralph [and his associates,] Gilpin, and de Souza [...] influence rather that [*sic*] contravene British policy, and, while morally they may do evil, they act according to coherent plans that are not self-serving” (Davis 304).

This is a new sort of menace within the *Sword of Honour* novels: not bumbling top-down incompetence, and not bottom-up manipulation, but bottom-up and top-down manipulation, undertaken by rational and effective agents of a foreign power. Further, “the dismemberment of Christendom” that is the goal of this menace is not merely geographical, but spiritual, and it is yet another piece of the novel that “dramatizes what since 1930 Waugh had thought the great battle of modern times, between (Catholic) Christianity and Communism, the only religions that



could any longer command assent” (Patey 351).<sup>117</sup> While the adoration of the Sword of Stalingrad points to religion and nation being tarnished as a result of England’s alliance with the Soviet Union, Sir Ralph’s infiltration of the command structure elevates the threat to the level of conscious conspiracy against Guy’s faith and nation.

Running parallel to Britain’s dangerous relationship with the Soviet Union is a question over the propriety of the Roman Catholic Church’s relationship with Mussolini, in a storyline that once again places the events of the central narrative in the context of events unfolding on a larger time scale. Guy initially insists, in a conversation with his father, that the Roman Catholic Church’s longevity should make it above worldly political matters: “That looks like the end of the Piedmontese usurpation [...]. What a mistake the Lateran Treaty was.”<sup>118</sup> It seemed masterly at the time – how long? Fifteen years ago? What are fifteen years in the history of Rome? How much better it would have been if the Popes had sat it out” (5). In a sense, Guy is correct to note a disparity in time scale between the Roman Catholic Church and the political events that shape its destiny. As Waugh would elsewhere argue, “seen through Christian eyes, all the migrations of peoples and the rise and fall of the empires, comprise merely a succession of moods and phases in the life of that society, the Church Christ founded” (“The American Epoch in the Catholic Church” 167-8).

Whereas Alan Munton has argued that “Waugh does not hold large-scale theories of his own about the nature of war” and that Waugh merely “describes the history of a war, but has no theory of history” – on the grounds that “he can have none, for the major questions are already

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<sup>117</sup> As Waugh himself puts it, “the latest imposture is more grossly impudent than its predecessor, Christianity, for the latter said, ‘Ye will be happy hereafter,’ and cannot be proved wrong [...] while the former says ‘My dear comrades, you may not realize it, but you *are* happy at this moment’” (“Marxism, the Opiate of the People” 153).

<sup>118</sup> The Lateran Treaty between Mussolini’s government and the Holy See was signed February 11 and ratified in Italian parliament June 7, 1929. The Lateran Treaty was one of the Lateran Pacts, which agreed to recognize Vatican City as a sovereign state under the authority of the Roman Catholic Church, and to financially compensate the Church for the 1870 abolition of the Papal States.

settled by his membership in the Catholic Church” (229) – it is important to recognize the multivalent nature of Waugh’s war trilogy, which parallels individual lives, the lives of nations, and the life of the Church. In fact, on the largest time scale, the three volumes of Waugh’s trilogy frame one such succession “in the life of [...] the Church Christ founded,” for the Lateran Treaty would return the Vatican to the temporal (a word, in this instance, denoting “worldly” rather than “related to time”) power of the Roman Catholic Church, counteracting the Church’s loss of worldly authority that was underway when Gervase and Hermione Crouchback visited Rome some seventy years earlier to receive the Pope’s blessing. In this sense, the Lateran Treaty finally compensates for the Church’s loss of power as a result of the rise of Italian nationalism, while placing personal, familial, national, and religious history side by side. In this sense, the response of Mr Crouchback to his son’s take on current events – “My dear boy, [...] you’re really talking the most terrible nonsense, you know” (6) – is apt, for the Church exists in the world, alongside the political movements of the day, and snubbing inconvenient realities is no more likely to be successful than it would have been for the historic Crouchbacks to ignore the penal laws or for Guy to continue hiding in his Castello.

Mr Crouchback’s reasons for seeing his son’s statement as nonsense extend further than mere impracticality, though, and are rooted in a definite view of the nature of the Roman Catholic faith. When he argues, “That isn’t at all what the Church is like. It isn’t what she’s *for*” (6), Mr Crouchback’s position is firmly teleological, though he is only able to clarify his meaning in a letter he sends his son after Guy’s departure:

Of course in the 1870s or 80s every decent Roman disliked the Piedmontese, just as the decent French now hate the Germans. And, of course, most of the Romans we know kept it up, sulking.[...] But that isn’t the Church. The Mystical Body doesn’t strike attitudes

and stand on its dignity. It accepts suffering and injustice. It is ready to forgive at the first hint of compunction.[...] Quantitative judgments don't apply. If only one soul was saved that is full compensation for any amount of loss of "face." (8)

Mr Crouchback's blanket rejection of "quantitative judgments" is slightly disingenuous, for his own apparently qualitative judgment is grounded in a quantitative calculation: his assessment of the value of "one soul" is grounded in the belief that the soul is eternal, and is therefore worth more than all worldly things combined. In fact, Mr Crouchback here re-deploys Guy's own logic to show it to be faulty because it underestimates the scale and gravity of the Church's project: while it is not practical for an institution that exists in the material world to ignore the political events of the day, it does not follow that the Roman Catholic Church should use the day's value judgments to assess itself. Mr Crouchback's position is clearly that, in comparison with the Church's programme to save individual souls, even Guy's concern with the dignity of the Church is petty and misdirected.<sup>119</sup>

Mr Crouchback's statement applies not only to the nature of Guy's religion, but also to Guy's faith in it – for Guy's faith, like his Church, must find a way to exist in the world, though Guy is ultimately focused on otherworldly ends. As Mr Crouchback's letter continues, the interpellation becomes still more direct while drawing together religious and familial roles:

I'm worried about you. You seemed so much enlivened when you first joined the army. I know you are cut up at being left behind in England. But you mustn't sulk.

It was not a good thing living alone and abroad. Have you thought at all about what you will do after the war? There's the house at Broome the village calls "Little

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<sup>119</sup> This passage is also consistent with what Patey sees as a broader juxtaposition of Catholicism and Communism (e.g. 350-1, partially quoted above): the juxtaposition here operates on the grounds that Communism's quick recourse to forms of moral calculus that resulted in countless deaths is the worst sort of "quantitative judgment."

Hall” – quite incorrectly. All the records refer to it simply as the “Lesser House.” You’ll have to live somewhere and I doubt if you’ll want to go back to the Castello[.] (8)

Ultimately, as Heath argues, Mr Crouchback’s explanation sets “the stage for the rest of *Unconditional Surrender*, which depicts Guy’s retreat from the intractable world of ‘quantitative values’ into the more manageable domain of personal and family relationships, and into the hierarchal world of qualitative values” (Heath 245). Mr Crouchback’s frank admission of his impending death (8) is especially important because it will lead to Guy finally becoming the head of the Crouchback family. Even if his seat will be merely the “Lesser House” – at this point in the narrative, this reduction suggests, symbolically, the family without an heir<sup>120</sup> – this traditional English house is a more appropriate seat than the Italian Castello. The role of family head is inseparable from the Crouchback family’s religion, and just as “sulking [...] isn’t the Church,” Guy “mustn’t sulk.” Though this is a call to duty, it is also a promise: whereas “[i]t was not a good thing living alone and abroad[,]” assuming a position consistent with familial and religious traditions is more likely to be “a good thing.” However nebulous such a promise would be, even if it were made explicitly, considering his place in the lesser house as the inverse of what Guy lacked at the Castello gives a clue as to what Mr Crouchback’s proposal promises: a position in which Guy is “accepted and respected,” but is also loved by his household and community, and is broadly *simpatico* (*Men at Arms* 11).

The decisive interpellation occurs when Mr Crouchback dies and Guy attempts to assume the position required of and promised to him. Guy understands his obligations to both faith and family primarily in terms of the example set by his father, and the scene of the funeral shows Arthur Box-Bender’s error in assuring the domestic prelate that Mr Crouchback “was an

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<sup>120</sup> See Trout for a discussion of how Lesser House fits with “the trilogy’s reductive motifs” (137).

Englishman first and a Christian second” (76) – a statement he intends as a compliment. The church at Broom, built by Gervase and Hermione Crouchback, is

as crowded for Mr Crouchback’s funeral as for midnight Mass at Christmas. When the estate was bit by bit dispersed in the lean agricultural years, the farms had been sold on easy terms to the tenants. Some had changed hands since, but there were three pews full of farmers in black broadcloth. The village were there in full force; many neighbors; the Lord Lieutenant of the county was in the front pew on the left next to a representative of the Knights of Malta. Lieutenant Padfield sat with the Anglican icar [*sic*], the family solicitor, and the headmaster of Our Lady of Victory. The nun’s choir was in the organ loft. The priests, other than the three who officiated, lined the walls of the chancel. (77)

Such broad attendance reflects a life lived in accordance with family tradition, the responsibilities of the landed gentry to both nation and local community, and the Catholic faith. This is a community in which Mr Crouchback had been *molto simpatico*. The number of attendees seems natural, for Guy thinks that “[f]ew people [...] had ever spoken ill of his father” (78), and he recognizes his father as “the best man, the only entirely good man, he had ever known” (79).

As the funeral proceeds, the words “Quantitative judgments don’t apply” echo through Guy’s mind (e.g. 79) as he “attempts the kind of self-scrutiny he has long avoided and, in this embrace of truth over fiction, [he] approaches genuine communion with his God” (DeCoste 151); Guy is also embracing a subject position, so that Guy’s prayers “to, rather than for, his father” (80) kindle “the active faith that will allow him once again to find a ‘place’, a way of participating in the world – and that will make his father’s words come true in his own life” (Patey 351). Though this new subject position is grounded in family, community, and nation,

Guy is also motivated by his belief that providence will provide him with an opportunity to provide some service “which only he could perform, for which he had been created. Even he must have his function in the divine plan. He did not expect a heroic destiny. Quantitative judgments did not apply” (81). Out of a desire to “recognize the chance when it offered,” Guy prays, “Show me what to do and help me to do it” (81), and is thus enabled “to fulfill the vocation of love, not war, to which he is called” (DeCoste 151). This vocation involves both the assumption of his father’s role as head of the Crouchback family and his ongoing vigilance as he waits for the opportunity to be of service.

The joint affirmation of faith and family in Guy’s new position as the head of the Crouchback family is responsible for enabling his initial act of charity, which first draws together all of the strands of Guy’s new mode of subjectivity. This opportunity comes when Virginia “inform[s] him, without any extenuation or plea for compassion, curtly almost, that she [i]s with child by Trimmer” (188). Though they quickly establish that Guy does not love Virginia any longer (185) and does not owe her any duty, despite still viewing her as his wife (187), her case presents Guy with the opportunity to provide a service only he can by remarrying Virginia and raising Trimmer as his own (Gallagher, “Humanizing” 26). It is difficult to present a simple and singular explanation for Guy’s motivations here, though, for several modes of intertwined subjectivity are involved, and answers that are restricted to a single aspect of his subjectivity inevitably fail to account for his behaviour. Clay Daniel has argued, “[h]is self-serving – or, at best, negatively unselfish – action is motivated by a false, perhaps even evil, sense of honor that derives from his notion of an aristocratic past” (49); but though there may be a hint of asceticism in Guy’s agreeing to be a father to *Trimmer’s* child, in particular, Daniel’s explanation echoes Kerstie Kilbannock’s analysis of the situation – as she puts it, “You poor bloody fool, [...]

you're being *chivalrous* – about *Virginia*. Can't you understand men aren't chivalrous anymore and I don't believe they ever were" (191) – whereas Guy's response seems like a convincing rebuttal: "'you see there's another – ' he was going to say 'soul'; then realized that this word would mean little to Kerstie for all her granite propriety – 'there's another life to consider. What sort of life do you think her child would have, born unwanted in 1944?'" (192).<sup>121</sup> Heath argues the other extreme: "Waugh leaves Guy fulfilled and little Trimmer potent with promise; furthermore, he shifts the reader's interest toward the future resurgence of the Crouchback family and away from the small joys and griefs of its individual members" (258). Though Trimmer's child does prevent Guy from being the final Crouchback, and thereby legitimizes his social position, Guy is only doing so by sacrificing the continuation of the Crouchback bloodline. Therefore, it seems closer to the truth to argue, as Patey does – rephrasing a central strand of Waugh's *Helena* (1950) – that the purpose of the Church is "not to fortify the walls against barbarism, but to bring the Hoopers and the Trimmers in" (353). While it is an oversimplification to insist that "[d]ynastic considerations go by the board where matters of faith are concerned, and when Guy remarries Virginia, only his religion motivates him," it clearly is the case that, "like the self-effacing behavior of the Church in the matter of the Lateran Treaty, Guy's act is a 'loss of face' which results in the salvation of a soul" (Heath 255), and that he is enabling this loss of face because "Guy hears God's call to act.[...] Thus is he finally reborn to the life his faith calls him to lead" (DeCoste 154). This moment is so important to the novel that it is a rebirth into a new mode of subjectivity, and critics often view it as the trilogy's climax (e.g. Rutherford 130; DeCoste 154).

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<sup>121</sup> In short, any selfish motivations fall short of negating the generally positive implications of casting Guy as a figure reminiscent of the great biblical accommodating cuckold, Christ's worldly father, Saint Joseph.

The fact that it is difficult to separate the elements of Guy's response and find a single satisfactory explanation for it is rooted in the fact that Guy's decision to adopt Virginia and Trimmer's child is a performance of a mode of patriarchy that *is* classed and gendered in an archaic if not anachronistic way that nonetheless enables an act of service that is also profoundly religious. Ultimately, agreeing to raise Trimmer's illegitimate son as his heir marks an important turning point in the novel not only because it is an important moment in Guy's Christian development – though it is – but also because it enables him to draw together the different elements of his subjectivity (religious, classed, gendered, familial, communal, and even national) to act in accordance with the complex but coherent form of subjectivity inherited from his father, bringing into alignment the requirements of what would otherwise seem to be distinct subject positions. In other words, at the moment Guy agrees to raise Trimmer's child, his multiple forms of interdependent subjectivity merge to act less like an assemblage (defined by external relations) and more like a stable and coherent group (defined internally).

Of course, this subjective synthesis is still fragile, and during Guy's trip to Yugoslavia – where he attempts a second grand act of service – this mode of subjectivity enters into direct conflict with the political and bureaucratic forces present throughout the trilogy. On his posting “in an island of ‘liberated territory,’ twenty miles by ten” in which occupants are “subject only to the requisitions of the partisans” (219), Guy is surrounded by soldiers who reinforce that England has aligned itself with an enemy, emphasizing that the territory is only nominally “liberated”:

the priests said Mass in their churches subject only to the partisan security police who lounged at the back and listened for political implications in their sermons. In one Mohammedan village the mosque had been burned by the Ustachi in the first days of



Croatian independence. In Begoy itself the same gang, Hungarian trained, had blown up the Orthodox church and desecrated the cemetery. (219)

It is no small thing to be “subject only to” – to use Waugh’s repeated meiotic phrase – the partisans. In the context of this ongoing history of violent religious persecution, Guy is reluctantly introduced to a group of Jewish refugees, “the survivors of an Italian concentration camp” (225). He finds them “half starving in Begoy” after a complicated journey through Eastern Europe, fearful that they will “all die” when winter comes, and “want[ing] to go to Italy” (226).

Guy is initially hesitant to help, and recognizes that doing so would undermine his official duties – which consist largely of relaying lies to the British.<sup>122</sup> But when he receives a message requesting particulars on displaced persons, he is able to bypass the partisan general staff and forward information he knows to be true – “He replied: *One hundred and eight Jews*” (229). When the response comes, “*Expedite details Jews names nationalities conditions*” (229), the partisans are forced to cooperate with Guy by taking him to the Jewish refugees “in a school near the ruined Orthodox church” (229). A harbinger of the fate of the refugees, this shell of a ruined church emphasizes the threat posed by the partisans, and the immediate danger is clear from the horrible state in which Guy finds the refugees: “the glass had all gone from the windows and been replaced with bits of wood and tin collected from other ruins. There was no furniture. The inmates for the most part lay huddled in little nests of straw and rags” (229).

However deplorable these conditions, as the de facto leader of the Jewish refugees, Mme Kanyi,

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<sup>122</sup> Guy’s duties are limited to “transmit[ting] reports on the military situation,” which are limited to the particulars he is given by the partisan “general staff” (221). In this position, Guy’s role is, in effect, to facilitate the manipulation of the British by the partisan forces, who are manufacturing “facts” to get what they want: “the General and the Commissar steered a delicate course between the alternating and conflicting claims that the partisans were destitute and that they maintained in the field a large, efficient modern army” (222).

makes clear, the hopelessness and marginality of the refugees make it difficult for them to cooperate with the British request for information: "You must see the Commissar [...]. Otherwise he will think there is some plot going on. We can do nothing, accept nothing, without the Commissar's permission. You will only make more trouble for us" (231). The accuracy of Mme Kanyi's analysis becomes evident when Guy speaks directly to the Commissar. This conversation shows the Commissar's only concern to be that Guy "acted incorrectly" by speaking directly to the refugees, and he refuses to understand "why a list is needed" (233). Ultimately, the Commissar interpellates Guy to act in his official role by preventing him from undertaking his duties, culminating in Guy sending the telegram, "*Jews condition now gravely distressed may become desperate. Local authorities uncooperative. Only hope higher level*" (234). It is obvious by this point in the trilogy that hope should never be sought on a higher level. It is also apparent, though, that the conflict with the Commissar places Guy in a position where he is duty bound to act in a way that is no longer determined solely by the partisans' desire to hide the truth from the British.

The disjunction between Guy's duties and the role the partisans would like him to play enables another alignment of Guy's subjective roles as a Catholic and an army officer; yet, the novel is at best ambivalent towards its results, and Guy's military obligations are not brought into alignment with the other facets of his newly emerged Catholic/familial subjectivity. By the time Guy receives a reply to his message, activities on a "higher level" have, against all odds, accomplished "one infinitesimal positive good" (245) so that the message he receives seems auspicious:

[Guy] felt compassion; something less than he had felt for Virginia and her child but a similar sense that here again, in a world of hate and waste, he was being offered the

chance of doing a single small act to redeem the times. It was, therefore, with joy that he received the signal: *Central Government approves in principle evacuation Jews stop Dispatch two repeat two next plane discuss problem with Unrra.* (245)

This reference to Guy's decision to be a father to Trimmer's child makes it explicit that Guy sees this a parallel chance to complete a spiritually significant act. Nonetheless, this opportunity is made available to him because of his position in the military, and necessarily involves combining faith and military service rather than faith and family.

The threat posed by such a combination of religious and martial subjectivity is finally eliminated only when the damage is done. Following his surprise arrival, Guy's superior – his old acquaintance and Sir Ralph's creature, Frank de Souza – marginalizes Guy as the military bureaucracy arranges the evacuation. While this marginalization unfolds, the urgency of the refugees' situation and Guy's desire to be of service are so great that when he receives news of Virginia's death in an air raid, it does "not affect Guy greatly; less, indeed, than the arrival of Frank de Souza" (251), emphasizing yet again that military service risks becoming more important to Guy than familial service. While family affairs fade in importance, Guy increasingly interprets the evacuation in terms that conflate military and religious duty: "It seemed to Guy [...] he was playing an ancient, historic role as he went to Bakic to inform the Jews of their approaching exodus. He was Moses leading a people out of captivity.[...] That day Guy's cuckold's horns shone like the patriarch's, when he came down from [...] Sinai" (289). Rather than marking masculine shame, Guy's cuckold status signifies holiness and virtue, as his previous sacrifice of personal honour becomes aligned with a public act of martial glory. This is not a singularly positive change, however, and as DeCoste puts it, "While he is now a truer

Christian warrior than [Sir] Roger led him to become, the call to service has again devolved into a romance of the self, lifted now from Exodus, not Kipling” (DeCoste 156; see also Davis 321).

Guy’s performance of an increasingly Moses-like martial/religious subjectivity also never reaches synthesis, and he is forced to leave Croatia before the refugees can be evacuated. His final meeting with Mme Kanyi results in Guy realizing he has been motivated by what Mme Kanyi calls “a will to war, a death wish” in which “[e]ven good men thought their private honor would be satisfied by war” (296). As Gallagher puts it, “war is itself no answer to the world’s evil;[...] the sword cannot drown injustice or restore jaded men to manhood” (“Disillusion” 206). The impossibility of merging martial and spiritual roles – as the former is motivated by a death wish – and enabling the kind of service Guy was able to perform by remarrying Virginia is made finally and devastatingly clear when one of Sir Ralph’s plants, Gilpin, tells Guy of the execution of Mme Kanyi and her husband as a direct consequence of Guy’s relationship with her.<sup>123</sup> Gilpin’s glib assertion, “They were tried by a Peoples’ Court. You may be sure justice was done” (301), makes explicit the deadliness of the bureaucratic drive to distort reality to facilitate political expediency, and the scope of the difficulty one faces in any attempt to “redeem the times” by acting within such a system.

### **Conclusions**

The end of the novel shows Guy having gained a familial role that nonetheless keeps him in contact with the external world, finally freed of the delusion that active military service will provide him with a satisfying spiritual life. Guy’s time in Yugoslavia has illustrated the inability of martial subjectivity to offer redemption, but the end of the novel is not entirely consistent with the idea that “Salvation is personal” (Gallagher, “Disillusion,” 206) – though this statement is

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<sup>123</sup> As a result of Guy’s meetings with Mme Kanyi, she has been determined to be “the mistress of a British Liaison Officer” (i.e., Guy; 301).

consistent with much critical opinion.<sup>124</sup> While Guy is most concerned with local and domestic life at the end of the novel, this does not mean he is living a merely personal or isolated existence. Sherron makes a similar point, while also calling into question the ability to neatly differentiate between public and private, by noting, “[h]is later withdrawal is [...] like Mr Crouchback’s, who, removed from the public sphere, still serves whatever function he can: squire, patron, schoolteacher, and father. The later Guy and Mr Crouchback both do their duty. They simply do it in private” (NP).

But it is also important to account for the comedic setting of the novel’s final chapter, which emphasizes Guy’s public life, with him now a contented member of a community. Far from showing merely the “tasteless world of quantitative values triumphant” (Heath 254), the novel’s Epilogue depicts “the descent of [a] Commando dinner party who stumble[] noisily down the staircase and into the billiard room” of Bellamy’s (305), and Guy a member of the assemblage: as Guy briefly parts from the group to talk to his brother-in-law, Bertie calls him back to the party – “Guy, come and play slosh” (306). Whether the novel ends with Guy and his new wife, Domenica Plessington, “with two boys of their own,” as in the original novel (307), or with the revision, “Pity they haven’t any children of their own” (*Sword of Honour* 764), the novel’s final line remains the same: “‘Yes,’ said Box-Bender, not without a small, clear note of resentment, ‘things have turned out very conveniently for Guy’” (*Unconditional* 307; *Sword*

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<sup>124</sup> For example, Joseph Hynes argues, “[w]hat Guy surrenders is any hope of public or collective action in which he can conscientiously participate” (74-5), concluding, “Guy’s seclusion is his only possible means of sustaining human relationships” (76); Gene Phillips emphasizes that the end of the novel displays “something of [a] withdrawal from the world [...] insulated from the hostile and disordered world beyond the gates of Broome” (136); though he sees the trilogy juxtaposing individual and collective, John Howard Wilson concludes that “Waugh focuses on the individual act, and he indicates that the results can be ambiguous, but he does not articulate how someone in his circumstances could have achieved salvation during the war” (Wilson 327); even Heath, who treats Guy’s withdrawal as much more limited than many critics, only attempts to mitigate the negative implications of what he still sees as a withdrawal by displacing Guy along with the Crouchback family, to insist that “Waugh almost certainly sees it as a period of recuperation which forms the basis of future action: from its stronghold in the west, the house of Crouchback, so nearly extinguished by its digression into error, will rise again” (Heath 254).

764). Neither ending is happy – the former has Guy’s legitimate children dispossessed by an illegitimate heir, and the latter has the Crouchback name continue and bloodline end. But both endings show Guy finally *simpatico* as he comfortably occupies a role that enables him to satisfy the needs of various subject positions, public and private.

The end of the narrative signals that, like his father, Guy has happily assumed his role as head of the Crouchback family. Though defining what this subject position entails is not quite as simple as reversing Arthur Box-Bender’s mistaken assessment of Mr Crouchback at his funeral – that he “was an Englishman first and a Christian second” – this complex subject position does involve being a Christian first, for it derives its identity primarily in terms of Christian service and requires continual engagement with a variety of communities, for without contact, service is impossible. The attendees of Mr Crouchback’s funeral service – including family, tenants, farmers, villagers, neighbours, official representatives (for the county and the Knights of Malta), a solicitor, the head of a Catholic school, nuns, and priests (three officiating, countless others lining the walls) – signal the breadth of the social network Guy will have to maintain in his ostensibly “private” role as the head of the Crouchback family, and Guy’s happy participation in a “Commando dinner party” at Bellamy’s indicates, in microcosm, ongoing (if not intensified) participation in that world.

While Guy’s final role is rooted in a domestic title (head of the family) and a specific space (the estate), it also includes roles in several other communities typically connected by members of the landed gentry,<sup>125</sup> including nation, district, and local community, but are, in Guy’s case, all subordinated to his position as the head of a Catholic family, and all provide ongoing opportunities to find ways to be of service. Thus, the novel’s ending is comedic, with

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<sup>125</sup> For a useful account of the historic responsibilities of the landed gentry, see the account by Sir James Henry Lawrence, in his 1824 text, *On the Nobility of the British Gentry*.

the protagonist reintegrated into his society, as a result of Guy's emergence, in a Bakhtinian fashion, along with the post-war world he occupies, and Guy's position as head of the Crouchback family does not isolate him from but connects him to that world.

While Woolf's novels set multivalent subjectivity as an ideal (that which is endangered by national and martial subjectivity), and while Orwell's novels set relational indeterminacy as an ideal (that which is threatened by macro-scale political machinations), Waugh's novels more explicitly historicize multiplicity and indeterminacy as conditions of modernity. What's more, rather than valorizing the forms of subjectivity evident when conceiving of society in terms of assemblages, by paralleling the terms of Guy's personal crisis with the historical emergence of his present world on multiple scales, Waugh suggests that the multiplicity and indeterminacy of Guy's subjectivity represent one of the greatest dangers of modern life. Waugh uses *Decline and Fall* to diagnose the problem so that Paul Pennyfeather's compulsory fluid subjectivity is frequently shown to be tied to efforts to modernize institutions. But it is in his last novel, *Unconditional Surrender*, that Waugh finally demonstrates Guy's familial/Catholic subjectivity to be an alternative to the fractured subjectivity he sees as endemic to modern life. Though Guy's final mode of subjectivity allows him to retain contact with members of other assemblages, this does not imply that he is governed by "relations of exteriority" (the hallmark of assemblages) as so many of the other forms of subjectivity discussed in this project have. Instead, his is a mode of subjectivity coded in such a way as to necessitate continual contact with the outside world while maintaining primacy over the other modes of subjectivity that might be triggered by such relationality. Whether or not this kind of opting out of participation in assemblage-based subjectivity is possible, Waugh sets it as an ideal, and diagnoses the difficulty achieving this ideal as a condition of modernity.

## Section Five – Conclusions

One reason for choosing to combine Virginia Woolf, George Orwell, and Evelyn Waugh in this project is that the three authors are different in so many respects that they emphasize the plurality of modernisms.<sup>126</sup> Yet, Waugh's historicizing fluid subjectivity as a specifically modern phenomenon is suggestive of a way to approach these three writers that does, nonetheless, point to a definition of modernism that is useful to all three, despite their diversity. It is here that Zygmunt Bauman's treatment of "liquid modernity" provides a useful framework for discussing the concern shared by these authors. Bauman utilizes "liquid" or "fluid" interchangeably to describe contemporary society: "Fluids travel easily. They 'flow', 'spill', 'run out', 'splash', 'pour over', 'leak', 'flood' [...]. The extraordinary mobility of fluids is what associates them with the idea of 'lightness' [...]. These are reasons to consider 'fluidity' or 'liquidity' as fitting metaphors when we wish to grasp the nature of the present, in many ways *novel*, phase in the history of modernity" (*Liquid Modernity* 2). In his view, contemporary society is characterized by a loss of political and subjective stability that leads to such liquidity or fluidity:

the collapse of long-term thinking, planning and acting, and the disappearance or weakening of social structures in which thinking, planning and acting could be inscribed for a long time to come, leads to a splicing of both political history and individual lives into a series of short-term projects and episodes which are in principle infinite, and do not

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<sup>126</sup> Focusing on the multiplicity of modernisms is by no means a novel critical approach. For instance, in 1976, Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane insist that the decision to use the term "modernism" "is clear; the nature of the movement or movements – the where, when, why and what of it – is much less so. And equally unclear is the status of the stylistic claim we are making. [...] [F]ew ages have been more multiple, more promiscuous in artistic style; to distil from the multiplicity an overall style or mannerism is difficult, perhaps even an impossible, task" (22-3). Likewise, Raymond Williams argues in a 1987 lecture, "After Modernism is canonized [...] [t]he marginal or rejected artists become classics of organized teaching and of travelling exhibitions in the great galleries of the metropolitan cities. 'Modernism' is confined to this highly selective field and denied to everything else in an act of pure ideology" ("When" 34). The tendencies to focus on plural "modernisms" over the singular has continued to increase since Peter Nicholls' influential *Modernisms, A Literary Guide* (1995).



combine into the kinds of sequences to which concepts like “development”, “maturation”, “career” or “progress” (all suggesting a preordained order of succession) could be meaningfully applied. (*Liquid Times* 3)

In terms of subjectivity, Bauman largely confines his characterization of fluidity/liquidity to the milestones in individuals’ lives, which, he argues, continually become less significant and more frequent as individuals lose the ability to develop along a single linear trajectory. In Bauman’s view, fluidity can be both an asset and a liability. Increased professional fluidity, for instance, makes it easier to change careers, but it also makes it difficult to find a career that will exist for the entirety of one’s working life, while placing the onus for finding a subject position that enables a worthwhile life solely on the individual (*Liquid Modernity* 32). It is in this sense that “[b]eing modern means being perpetually ahead of oneself, in a state of constant transgression [...]; it also means having an identity which can exist only as an unfulfilled project” (*Liquid Modernity* 29). Bauman argues that this increasing fluidity, so familiar in our world – peopled as it is by sessional lecturers where once there were tenured professors, contract consultants where once there were full-time employees with pensions, an endless flow of interns where once there were entry-level positions, and to project into a probable and not too distant future, networks of autonomously driven fleets of trucks where once there was a trucking industry – was present with modernism, but has been intensifying.

Bauman insists that contemporary society should be treated as “liquid modernity” rather than “post-modernity,” as our world may differ from modernism in degree of (and attitude towards) fluidity, but not in kind. His focus on fluidity, for instance, is strikingly similar to that on display in *The Communist Manifesto* (1848), in which Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels describe the ill-effects of capitalism:

Constant revolutionizing of production,[...] everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones. All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses, his real conditions of life, and his relations with his kind. (222-3)

Despite recognizing the similarity between his account and that of Marx and Engels, Bauman is not arguing that there is no difference between past forms of modernity and today's. The difference, Bauman insists, is that earlier accounts of modern fluidity were composed "not in order to do away with the solids once and for all and make the brave new world free of them forever, but to clear the site for *new and improved solids*; to replace the inherited set of deficient and defective solids with another set, which was much improved and preferably perfect, and for that reason no longer alterable" (*Liquid Modernity* 3).

But where Bauman's focus is on the contemporary embodiments of "liquid modernity," I am primarily interested in what his account has to offer a study of modernism, particularly insofar as it provides a way to approach the modernist writing of Woolf, Orwell, and Waugh. "Liquidity" or "fluidity" can also serve as useful metaphors for any aspect of an individual's life, also working well as a way to characterize the subjective instabilities that emerge from an assemblage-based approach. "Fluidity" is useful as a term to describe any state characterized by ongoing (de/re)territorializations, be they shifts from one subjective state to another or oscillations between states. It is for this reason that I have periodically leaned on Bauman's metaphor to describe "fluid subjectivity," as this term has provided me with an additional way to signal the lack of finality that results from subjectivity defined by the exteriority of relations.

Though using this model as an account of modernist studies emphasizes that Woolf, Orwell, and Waugh share an interest in modern fluid subjectivity, it does not suggest that all three would evaluate it in the same way. Of the three authors' responses to increasingly fluid subjectivity, Waugh's is most in keeping with Bauman's treatment, both in terms of his characterizations of the negative side of liquid modernity and his attempt to respond by asserting a more solid social structure. For Waugh, as for Bauman, an endless series of subject positions with no pre-defined ends is not an improvement, as it merely replaces growth and maturation with directionless serialization. And as Bauman argues that Marx and Engels are responding to such fluidity by attempting to formulate a more durable "solid" social structure, Waugh's focus on a stable form of subjectivity is an attempt to assert the value of a disappearing way of life, to denaturalize subjective instability, and to propose a way to survive the modern world.

While the Woolf texts I have focused on and my interest in Woolf's group ontology suggest a naturalization of quotidian fluid subjectivity in her fiction, a more prolonged treatment of *A Room of One's Own* and *Three Guineas* would doubtlessly reveal a more historicized account of multivalent subjectivity and a more direct endorsement of fluid subjectivity that replaces being barred from or trapped inside Oxbridge with potentially allowing access to those who want and deserve it. Indeed, bringing these essays into contact with *Mrs Dalloway* would highlight the fact that the horrors represented by the Bradshaws of the world are rooted in the singularity, and consequent impenetrability, of their subject positions. In this way, Woolf could be said to quite explicitly historicize fluid subjectivity, albeit a more quotidian form than Bauman is interested in, and to argue for its benefits, for fluidity enables an attack on ossified and oppressive modes of subjectivity.

Orwell's fiction requires a careful consideration of how one defines "fluidity": it suggests that relational indeterminacy is necessary for healthy democracy, but that the subjective indeterminacy created by modern politics is a scourge. The forms of fluidity promoted by INGSOC in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* – characterized by doublethink – are grounded in barring relational indeterminacy and demanding the internal subjective indeterminacy that follows from wholly defining one's subjectivity in relation to a single political identity more concerned with maintaining its supremacy than holding to any particular discourse. In such cases, DeLanda's metaphor of assemblage as a concept with knobs reaches its limits: for Orwell, modern political identity is highly coded (the entire system of meaning is relevant to one's political identity), but the codes are not necessarily consistent, and the content of the codes is not as important as their perpetual rightness. In Orwell's account, political language protects the coherence of political identity by relying on discourses sufficiently vague to conceal such inconsistencies: "When there is a gap between one's real and one's declared aims, one turns as it were instinctively to long words and exhausted idioms, like a cuttlefish spurting out ink. In our age[...] [a]ll issues are political issues, and politics itself is a mass of lies, evasions, folly, hatred, and schizophrenia" ("Politics" 154). The "rightness" of one's political identity, here, is grounded in power, so that whatever allows the correct group to gain or maintain that power must surely be right at this moment, whether or not it will continue to be so in five minutes.

Whereas totalitarianism pushes such tendencies to their limits, relational indeterminacy is incompatible with such absolute but inconsistent coding. Relational indeterminacy provides access to forms of identity that do not require the subjective fracture Orwell often refers to as "schizophrenia," which is predicated on "doublethink" – coding that depends on a subject holding two contradictory views, both of which are integral to his or her political identity. As

Orwell explains, “What is new in totalitarianism is that its doctrines are not only unchallengeable but also unstable. They have to be accepted on pain of damnation, but on the other hand they are always liable to be altered at a moment’s notice” (“Prevention” 938). For Orwell, totalitarianism demands internally fluid subjectivity (a singular mode of identity that can require one to radically change behaviour from one moment to the next to maintain a consistent subject-position) and forbids relational fluidity (as maintaining the exteriority of relations enables multiple forms of subjectivity, some of which may be at odds with one’s political identity). DeLanda’s “concept with knobs” metaphor would need two additional knobs to work in such a case, so that “degree of coding” (how much discourse is relevant to one’s assemblage) would be supplemented with “consistency of coding” (how internally consistent the codes governing one’s group membership are) and “stability of coding” (how frequently and dramatically the content of the codes defining identity change).

\* \* \*

The vocabulary and approach suggested by assemblage theory have given me new ways to approach Woolf’s, Waugh’s, and Orwell’s writing, and have suggested ways to approach modernist literature according to the authors’ treatments of different types of multiplicity, indeterminacy, and fluidity. The study of these modernist texts has also provided feedback, suggesting ways to examine and refine contemporary assemblage theory to optimize it for the study of modernist literature.

### **Assemblage Theory**

In an attempt to develop the elements of assemblage theory that could be most fruitfully applied to modernist literature, I begin “Section One – Theoretical Approach” by providing an examination of the origins of assemblage theory and outlining some of its key terms. To this end,

I start by noting David Hume's influence on Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, arguing that the model of subjectivity that emerges from Deleuze's study of Hume and larval subjectivity is implicit throughout Deleuze's works, whether they are sole- or co-authored. The model of subjectivity that emerges foregrounds the importance of memory and habit in shaping assemblages on multiple scales: they shape both which larval subjects are activated in response to "the given" events of a particular moment; at the same time, the activities of larger-scale assemblages are part of "the given," and the particular subject that emerges as an assemblage of larval subjects in response to particular stimuli must interact with these larger-scale assemblages in ways consistent with the perceived relationality of social and individual assemblage. The imbrication of assemblages operating on multiple scales that this conception of subjectivity is rooted in foregrounds the importance of understanding assemblage to be defined by the "exteriority of relations," meaning that an assemblage (and its components, which are also assemblages) is not defined internally, but by its relationships with other assemblages. This leads to Deleuze's "double articulation," which defines movement within and between assemblages in terms of the linked and overlapping processes of (de/re)territorialization and coding that, in a simple case, correspond roughly to the material and informational elements of an assemblage.

I then consider Manuel DeLanda's modifications to Deleuze and Guattari's model. The first important development DeLanda proposes involves his "parameterization" of the assemblage, which uses Deleuze and Guattari's treatment of the double articulation to conceive of assemblages as collectives shaped by activity on material and expressive planes such that modifying either of these variables will result in differences in the precise shape and nature of an assemblage. The parameterized assemblage, DeLanda argues, is better equipped to prevent

micro-, macro-, and meso-reductionism, which explain social phenomena according to activity on a single small, large, or intermediate scale.

But while DeLanda's approach streamlines some of Deleuze and Guattari's terminology in a way that also bars reductionism, his attempt to redefine assemblage theory as a realist philosophy and his associated insistence that only "valid historical actors" be treated as assemblages limits the utility of his approach for the study of modernist literature, as the experience of the subject engaging with and navigating assemblages is foregrounded in the writing of Woolf, Orwell, and Waugh, and the subject's perceptions of the group membership that shapes his or her behavior is not always rooted in correct assessments of which assemblages really do and do not exist. To counteract this limitation, I suggest combining DeLanda's model with, on the one hand, Althusser's, so as to be able to account for the moment when subjects feel compelled to act out of pressure to conform with what they perceive to be the expectations placed on them by membership in a specific group (whether that group really exists or not), and with, on the other hand, Nietzsche's, as a way to account for the particularly strong pressure to assemble that can result from an existentialist perception of the pointlessness of existence (a pressure which litters the modernist texts I study).

### **Virginia Woolf**

In "Section Two – Virginia Woolf," I then analyze Woolf's fiction in terms of her concern with group ontology and the multivalent subjectivity of the individual. In "Elegiac Assemblage: Subjectivity and Group Ontology in *Jacob's Room*," I begin by responding to readings of *Jacob's Room* that discuss Jacob as being interpellated by ideology rather than by specific assemblages, arguing that the subjectivity of the characters present in *Jacob's Room* is shown to be defined by their membership in different assemblages operating on a variety of

spatiotemporal scales. The novel's depictions of synchronic group activity show the individual attempting to interpret his or her social world to know how to navigate multiple modes of subjectivity that are sometimes mutually exclusive and frequently operate on multiple spatial scales, emphasizing the need for a model of assemblage interpellation that is agnostic about whether or not the apparent assemblage is a valid historical actor. The novel's depictions of diachronic assemblage reveal synchronic group activity to be shaped by assemblages rooted in processes unfolding on a variety of temporal scales, from the moment to the millennia. The individuals' contact with these larger spatiotemporal scales signals the relationship between processes of assemblage, the need for refuge from Dionysian chaos and meaninglessness, and the Apollonian mediation of the Dionysian by way of social and cultural. The text's composition foregrounds the importance of shared memory by showing the partial and fragmentary nature of individual memory, and the elegiac function of *Jacob's Room* is dependent on recognizing that the death of Jacob is a loss to all the assemblages he was a part of, and that his martial subjectivity operates by reducing his multivalent subjectivity to singular service to the state. This process is problematic both because of the loss it imposes on the assemblages operating on scales other than the national, but also because it misses the Dionysian roots of membership, corrupting the individual and social need to survive into a need to kill and die on behalf of the nation.

In "Discourse, Assemblage, and Epiphany in *Mrs Dalloway*," I respond to readings of *Mrs Dalloway* that treat the novel as a critique of the social system without carefully defining what "social system" means by analyzing the ways individual and assemblage are both shaped by the processes of interpellation. Such analysis foregrounds the importance of the semiotic element of assemblage interpellation that shapes the overall assemblage by influencing the behaviour of the individual who interprets his or her duties with reference to perceptions of the



overall group. This is an internal account of multivalent subjectivity not present in *Jacob's Room* because the reader is not given Jacob's perspective of the novel's events. The breadth of Clarissa Dalloway's relationships enables a detailed consideration of subjective emergence as a result of relationality, as her behaviour is continually shaped by her interactions as she shifts between the expectations she faces as a mother, a wife, an old friend, a hostess, a citizen of England, and a member of a privileged class (to name a few of her many roles). Clarissa's relationships also emphasize individual memory as a crucial part of the semiotic element of assemblage interpellation, as Clarissa continually reframes the present with reference to her memories of past interactions, struggling to act in a way that synthesizes past and present. The inclusion of Septimus Smith in *Mrs Dalloway* shows the dangers of personal memory, and suggests the consequences of reducing subjectivity to a single scale do not disappear at the end of a war, but continue to create problems for those soldiers who survive and need to find a way to re-integrate into society. The meeting of the parallel narrative strands dominated by Clarissa and Septimus draws attention to the importance of communication as an Apollonian technology that is neglected by the Bradshaws of the world at the expense of the Septimuses, for one of the things the latter need to return to healthy multivalent subjectivity is an Apollonian system that is able to account for wartime experiences in a way they find plausible.

My final chapter in Section Two, "Conventional, Oppositional, and Existential Assemblage in *Between the Acts*," replies to critics who see Woolf's final novel as focused exclusively on collectives. I argue that *Between the Acts* uses Miss La Trobe's pageant to analyze English collective memory as a foundation of nationalism and the fraught nature of the national unity that can be gained by the subjective homogenization implicit in national membership, while exploring the existentialist basis of group membership and emphasizing the relationship

between individual and local community. The members of the Oliver household deal with the personal and interpersonal consequences of their roles in assemblages on various scales that are threatened by the approaching war. Thus, the quotidian multivalent subjectivity that is destroyed in *Jacob's Room* and given detailed examination in *Mrs Dalloway* faces a moment of crisis in *Between the Acts* as the characters attempt to interpret the personal and interpersonal implications of global conflict.

### **George Orwell**

The analysis of Orwell's writing that I undertake in "Section Three – George Orwell" also considers group membership to be grounded in the existentialist need to generate meaning in a meaningless world, though it shifts the focus somewhat off of Woolf's concerns with group ontology and onto Orwell's interest in the discursive foundations that govern group membership and the scale discrepancies manipulated to control individuals. In my first chapter in this section, "Isolation and the Attempted Founding of a New Community in *Burmese Days*," I analyze the attempts of John Flory to escape his complicity with imperialism by building alternatives to the European Club. A character that has long been burdened by his memory of and habitual participation in the British colonization of Burma, John Flory has a history of attempting to escape the dangerously ossified discourse of the European Club by forging new relationships – most markedly with Dr Veraswami and Ma Hla May. As with much of Woolf's fiction, Flory's need is rooted in living too close to the abyss of meaninglessness, and the attempts to assemble depicted in the novel are all undertaken as ways to escape this situation. However, the other members of these groups are navigating the same social atmosphere as Flory and, due to their marginalized positions as non-white denizens of a state ruled by a racist and imperialist British government, they are unable to escape these forms of subjectivity sufficiently to be able to

provide Flory with the type of community he needs. The arrival of Elizabeth Lackersteen seems to offer Flory his best chance to form an assemblage that will be able to provide his life with the meaning the European Club cannot. Yet, Elizabeth's own memories, first of affluence and then of poverty, have made her unsuited to this role by making her wary of the value Flory places on the arts (which she sees as a path to poverty and degradation) and on the Burmese people (who she is keen to degrade as a way to ensure her own social elevation). Flory's suicide is a result of these failed attempts to form meaningful assemblages, which have generated oppositional assemblages that he cannot escape (most principally, the oppositional assemblage composed of Dr Veraswami and U Po Kyin, as Flory's friendship with Veraswami makes Flory a threat to Po Kyin's bid for membership in the European Club). When Po Kyin uses Flory's sexual relationship with Ma Hla May to publicly embarrass Flory, Flory loses hope of gaining a meaningful alternative to the Club, while also becoming more isolated from the other Club members, and responds by committing suicide.

In, "Assemblage, Community, and Subjectivity in *Homage to Catalonia*," I respond to critical debates over whether Orwell is acting against community in general or as a responsible member of a particular community by examining Orwell's documentary of his time in the POUM militia in the Spanish Civil War. I argue Orwell attempts to utilize his personal memory to counter the newspaper accounts and emerging collective memory of the events that led to what we now know to be the scapegoating of his militia. Orwell explains the beginnings of the war in terms of the emergent activity of a large number of people with comparable accounts of the world who spontaneously decide to act. As the war continues, though, the republican cause is continually undermined by the spatiotemporal discrepancy between individuals and political organizations. In their alliance with the Soviet Union, the communists become a counter-

revolutionary force and manipulate the short-term thinking of citizens who are focused on the day to day business of fighting a war to wage a two-pronged assault on their own citizens: scapegoating their enemies by shifting public opinion against the POUM in newspaper accounts, but doing so too slowly for the increasing implausibility of their case to be readily apparent; and gradually eliminating the freedoms gained by revolution to increase their own power. Orwell's own subjectivity is reduced to that of a fleeing criminal when he is sought for arrest following the scapegoating of his militia, but this activity interpellates him into a subjectivity increasingly dominated by his marriage. When he returns to England, Orwell is also returned to a multivalent mode of subjectivity that makes it necessary to speak out to attempt to help his wartime comrades who are suffering in republican prisons, but also as a way to protect England from the threat of the macroscopic political entities he encountered in Spain. In this way, memory is important as the means to resist the manipulation of individuals by political parties who consciously try to shift discourse too gradually to be noticeable, and it offers a way to counter the accounts of those who have been successfully manipulated before their mistaken accounts come to be taken as historical accounts.

Finally, my analysis of Orwell's final novel, "Isolation and Assemblage in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*," focuses on his depiction of the threats of macroscopic political forces such as those he encountered in Spain by means of presenting a future totalitarian government in the state of Oceania. INGSOC, the ruling party, has neutralized the threat of having their power challenged by their citizens by controlling all interpersonal relationships, subordinating all of these relationships to a subjectivity that consists solely of Party status, creating Newspeak as a way to prevent the formation of discourses that challenge their authority, and by continually revising history to create belief in their own infallibility. In this way, the Party both overcodes

society and maximizes the pressure to territorialize according to its desire to create subjects that do not have access to the forms of free relationality that would enable them to pose a collective threat to the party. Individual memory is an important tool in Winston Smith's attempt to resist the party, and it becomes the basis of his effort to, like John Flory, create an assemblage sufficiently free of Party influence to be able to give his life meaning. The failure of this attempt reinforces the threat posed by macroscopic political organizations, but it also interpellates its readers to political action against totalitarianism.

### **Evelyn Waugh**

I begin my final section, "Section Four – Evelyn Waugh," by analyzing the discrepancy between territorialization and coding in "Taxonomic Tyranny and Arbitrary Assemblage in *Decline and Fall*" to respond to critics who read the novel as a testimony of the Dionysian's defeat of the Apollonian in modern society. I argue that, in *Decline and Fall*, Paul Pennyfeather's expulsion from Scone College – a result of what College officials treat as Paul's conveniently marginal subjectivity – leads to a chaotic series of shifts between subject positions. This demonstrates both the delusions governing social taxonomies and the repressiveness of the territorializing forces that use these taxonomies to enforce compulsory membership in these groups. Paul only achieves something approaching a personally meaningful life when he learns to do what many of the characters he has met throughout the narrative do: exploit the gaps between world and taxonomy, referent and sign, territorialization and coding, to assume a subject position he finds acceptable. *Decline and Fall* undermines the desirability of this strategy, however, both by suggesting the negative effects of Peter Pastmaster's memory of the novel's events, and by signalling that the problematic society depicted in the novel will eventually lead Peter's generation to compulsory participation in WWII.

My final chapter, “Multivalent Emergence in the *Sword of Honour* Trilogy,” examines Waugh’s WWII trilogy – consisting of *Men at Arms*, *Officers and Gentlemen*, and *Unconditional Surrender* – as an example of a Bakhtinian bildungsroman, arguing it depicts the simultaneous and interrelated historical emergence of a type of human and the world he occupies. In the case of *Sword of Honour*, Guy Crouchback’s final mode of subjectivity, as the head of a Catholic family, provides him with the subjective stability required to live a satisfactory life. Guy begins the series dangerously isolated following a divorce, and only re-emerges into the public sphere when he decides to enter the service as a way to take up arms against the abstract “Modern Age in Arms” that embodies the alliance between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany. Yet, the narrative mirrors personal and institutional instability and delusion, showing Guy’s error in thinking martial subjectivity can provide him with a meaningful life or enable him to make a meaningful contribution to humanity. It is only when Guy’s final mode of subjectivity, as the head of a Catholic family, displaces martial subjectivity that Guy finds a stable form of subjectivity that gives him access to both a sustaining life and a way to be valuable member of his communities. This form of subjectivity remains engaged in the world and multivalent, but it is not governed by the exteriority of relations in a way an assemblage would be: instead, it subordinates all of Guy’s forms of subjectivity under his status as the head of a Catholic family. This account parallels different temporal registers (as family, Catholic Church, and nation are depicted as evolving on parallel historical paths), but shows subjectivity as grounded in these historical narratives, so that Guy’s role as the head of the Crouchback family comes to be rooted in Crouchback collective memory only after Guy rejects the subjectivity implicit with adopting Halberdier collective memory. This conclusion counters the popular critical reading of the end of the novel as Guy, in some sense, retreating back into the private sphere.

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Therefore, all three authors treat subjectivity in terms of the complex interrelationship of individual and assemblage. These readings suggest it is important to have a model of assemblage interpellation for modernist studies that is not limited to assemblages that exist as what DeLanda terms valid historical actors for a few reasons. First, the works of Woolf, Orwell, and Waugh all emphasize that the need for personal meaning or significance is important for any account of the individual's experience of the processes of assemblage. In addition, all approach the processes of interpellation by emphasizing the centrality of subjective interpretation of prevailing codes. Woolf's concerns with multivalent assemblage suggest that the subject is continually trying to interpret the coding of assemblages that may or may not actually exist. Orwell's interest in aspirational assemblage, in the subject behaving according to types of relationality he or she is trying to bring into being, emphasize the extent to which political action is grounded in trying to respond to or counteract existing forms of social assemblage, so that limiting analysis to valid historical actors misses what is at stake in politically motivated personal action. Waugh's focus on delusional assemblage, on individuals suffering as a result of discrepancies between territorialization and coding – or between, on the one hand, the groups that exist and what membership in those groups is actually like for a member of those groups, and on the other, the popular accounts of those groups that are used to determine their membership – suggests that focusing exclusively on valid historical actors could lead to missing most of the territorial pressures subjects actually face. The result of these pressures is, for Waugh, extreme fluid subjectivity that necessitates serially changing identity at the expense of personal growth and the establishment of a meaningful place in society. All of these accounts provide reasons to question DeLanda's desire to focus exclusively on assemblages that are valid historical actors, as they all

give different instances of ways subjectivity is dependent on interpreting one's apparent place in assemblages that either do not exist at all, or whose existence bears no resemblance to the accounts that govern membership in them.

In line with emphasizing the importance of assemblages that may or may not actually exist to account for the experience of navigating membership in multiple assemblages, all three writers also emphasize the importance of recognizing the need for personal significance as foundational to the motivation of individuals to assemble into social groups at all. In Woolf's fiction, assemblage is necessitated by the existentialist meaninglessness that emerges from considering civilization as an ongoing process that operates on an enormous spatiotemporal scale, and the groups humans form must be able to account for the human need to find meaning in group membership and activity. In Orwell's writing, life is pointless without relationships that are able to generate modes of subjectivity that make it worth living, and macro-scale political institutions threaten the individual's ability to have a meaningful life by constraining the discourses people are able to access and the types of relationality people are able to utilize to form meaningful groups. And in Waugh's novels, the compulsory serialization of subjectivity endemic to modern life prevents individuals from achieving the only mode of existence that can give humans meaning: a stable subject position grounded in continuing traditions of Christian service to one's communities. In these ways, all three writers suggest the value of treating Nietzsche's philosophy as providing an account of group formation, emphasizing the extent to which subjects' attempts to navigate membership in multiple assemblages are bound to their need to feel as though their social lives give meaning to their personal lives.

Finally, all three writers draw attention to the importance of having access to distinct registers of memory as ways to meaningfully ground personal subjectivity and group



membership. For Woolf, the true purpose of civilization is visible only if one has access to the macroscopic temporal perspective that brings the overall project of civilization into focus. Yet, the individual's reliance on personal memory and continual interpretation of the memories shared with one's interlocutors, as well as the public collective memory that others are likely drawing on for their interpretations of social phenomena, requires considering multiple types of historical accounts and scales of collective memory to be able to describe what it is like for a subject to manage simultaneous membership in multiple assemblages. For Orwell, macroscopic political institutions operate on large temporal scales, exploiting the short memory of individuals to gradually shape collective memory until their disingenuous accounts are viewed as history. The key, for Orwell, is to assert personal memory against such attempts to manipulate collective memory and history; the personal does not remain personal in this account, however, as this ground-up process counters politically manipulated collective memory and ideologically determined modes of history with accounts of the past that are truer and better suited to the formation of just political systems. For Waugh, identity is grounded in shared accounts of the past that shape both identity and what it means to act reasonably and responsibly in the present. Institutional and personal delusions about the past lead to disingenuous accounts of the present, and these promote fluid subjectivity rather than the type of stable and historically-grounded identity that can enable one to lead a meaningful life in modern society. In these ways, Woolf, Orwell, and Waugh suggest that accounting for individual experiences of interpellation and the existentialist needs behind assemblage require considering the types of remembrance active in assemblages: such forms of remembrance operate on multiple spatiotemporal scales, and not all modes form part of the same "coding" that all group members will respond to in comparable ways.

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